THE CHALLENGE AHEAD:

Regional Trends in the Social Environment

JANUARY 1991

Province of British Columbia

Ministry of Social Services and Housing

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Regional Trends in the Social Environment

Ministry of Social Services and Housing
January, 1991

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Foreword

This report represents the product of the first part of the ministry's business planning process for 1991/92 - the environmental scan. It is intended to reflect major areas of concern in the social environment and their possible implications for the Ministry of Social Services and Housing.

The Business Plan for fiscal year 1990/91 was released in October, 1989. That Plan contained a review of the provincial economic and social environment and identified the key issues which will be facing the ministry in the 90's. It set out the ministry's Mission and Values and articulated the ministry's Goals and Strategic Priorities.These key statements of direction will be reviewed each year as part of the planning process.

The process of review for the 1991/92 Business Plan began in the fall of 1989. Staff in each of the ministry's ten administrative regions conducted an environmental scan to identify the key economic and social issues which will affect the ministry and its clients.

Section I, the Regional Perspective, is a region-by-region description of local demographic and economic conditions. The content is based on information provided by the local staff in the ministry offices across the province, plus statistical material and reports from various government agencies. These regional descriptions illustrate the diversity of the province and the wide range of issues which will affect the ministry.

Section II, The Provincial Perspective, captures those issues which are common to most or all regions and affect the province as a whole.

A variety of material was consulted to illustrate and complement the information from the regions in order to provide a provincial perspective. Statistical material and reports provided by the Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations were particularly useful.

Section I: The Regional Perspective

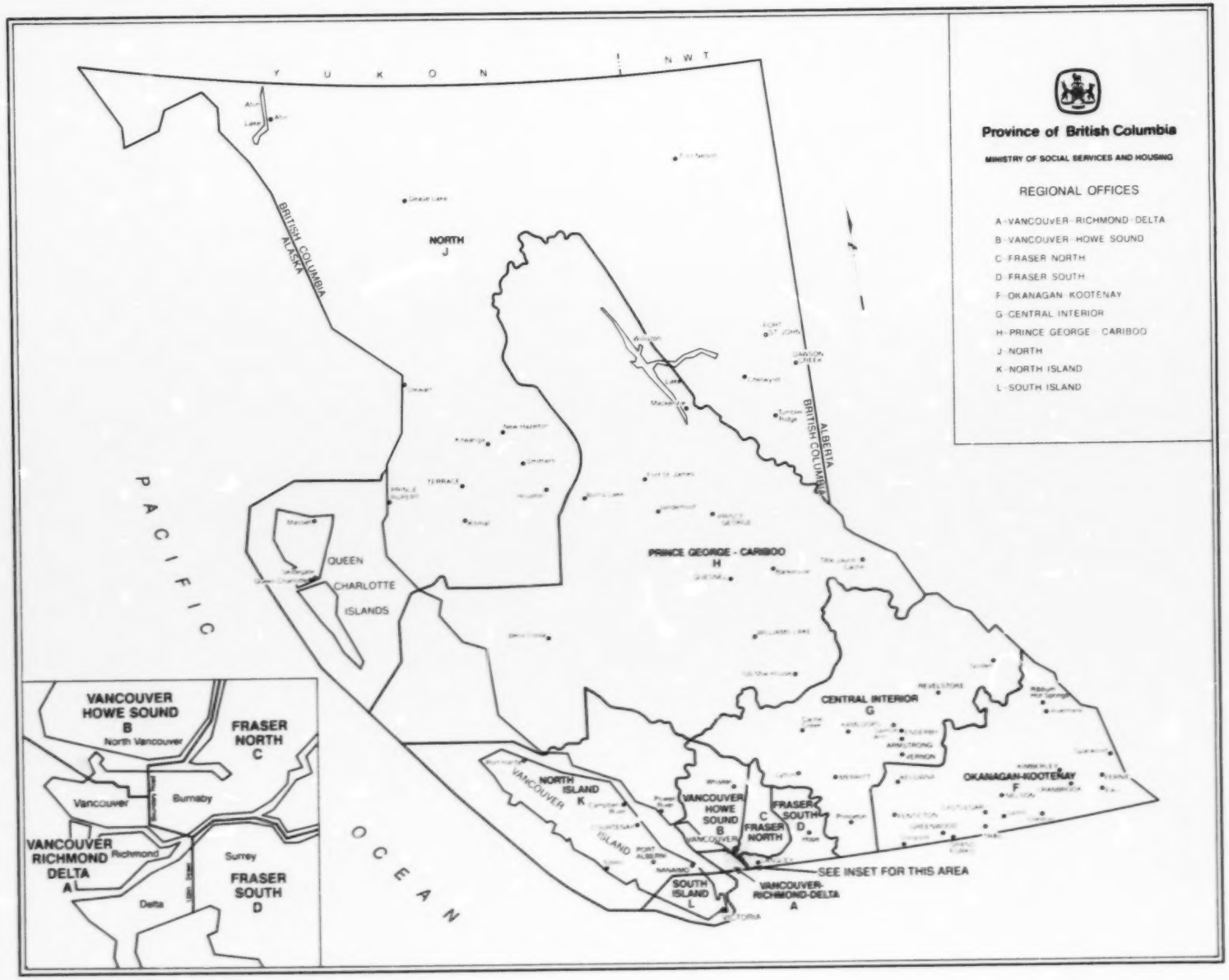
The Ministry of Social Services and Housing must respond to issues which are province-wide. However, the degree to which these issues affect the ministry's clients varies considerably from region to region.

To deliver social services which are effective and which meet the diversity of local conditions and needs, the management of the ministry is divided into ten regions for the purpose of both strategic planning and program delivery. The ministry is committed to regional sufficiency and regional delivery of ministry programs and services. In order for this approach to be effective and serve the local needs, the ministry must take full advantage of the local knowledge and experience of its staff in the field.

In recognition of the value of such knowledge and experience, ministry staff within each of the ten administrative regions were asked to participate in a systematic examination of their regions and communities. These regional environmental scans provide the background for the development of future goals and strategies.

The information obtained from each region is summarized in this section. It is illustrated with statistical data which was obtained from a number of ministry and other government sources.

The issues which emerge will provide the framework for developing short and long range policies and programs for the regions and for the ministry as a whole.


Province of British Columbia
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING
REGIONAL OFFICES
A - VANCOUVER - RICHMOND - DELTA
B - VANCOUVER - HOWE SOUND
C - FRASER NORTH
D - FRASER SOUTH
F - OKANAGAN - KOOTENAY
G - CENTRAL INTERIOR
H - PRINCE GEORGE - CARIBOO
J - NORTH
K - NORTH ISLAND
L - SOUTH ISLAND
YUKON
N.W.T.
ALBERTA
BRITISH COLUMBIA
ALASKA
BRITISH COLUMBIA
PACIFIC
OCEAN
NORTH
J
PRINCE GEORGE - CARIBOO
H
QUEEN
CHARLOTTE
ISLANDS
CENTRAL INTERIOR
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VANCOUVER ISLAND
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FRASER NORTH
C
FRASER SOUTH
D
SOUTH ISLAND
L
VANCOUVER-RICHMOND-DELTA
A
SEE INSET FOR THIS AREA
VANCOUVER HOWE SOUND
B
North Vancouver
FRASER NORTH
C
Vancouver
Burnaby
VANCOUVER RICHMOND DELTA
A
Richmond
Surrey
FRASER SOUTH
D
Delta

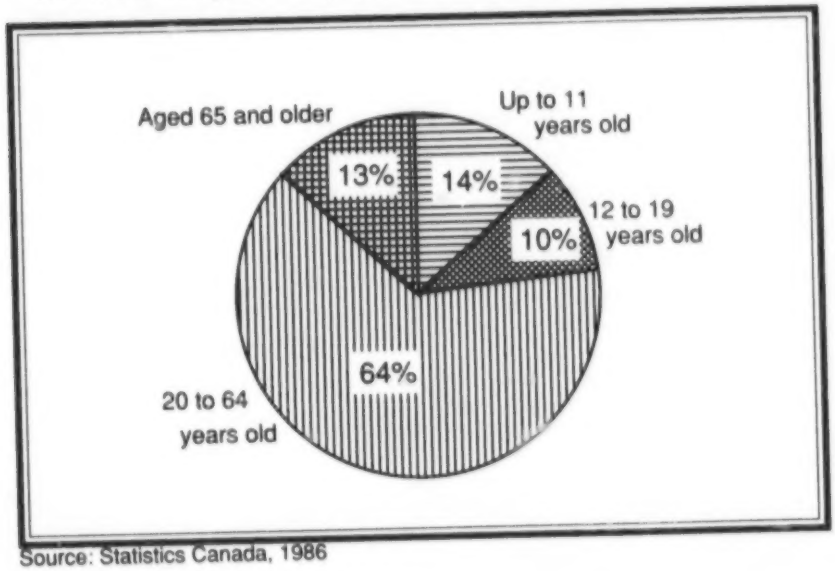
Region A Vancouver - Richmond - Delta

Population Characteristics

The total population of region A is approximately 535,000.

- There are 133,500 families
- 64% of the families have children living at home
- There is an average of 1.8 children per family
- 20% of families with children are single parent households.
- The median age of the population is 34.4 years.

Figure 1:
Population Distribution



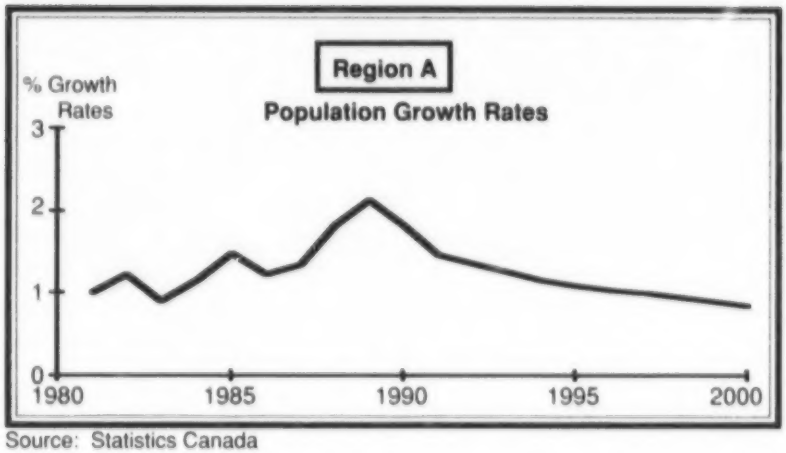
Source: Statistics Canada, 1986

Trends and Implications

The area of Vancouver-Richmond-Delta is largely urban and experienced rapid population growth in the late '80's. The population increased by almost 9% from 1986 to 1990. It is expected that this region will continue to experience strong population growth, reaching a forecasted population of almost 600,000 by 1996. Projections beyond 1996 show a slower average annual growth rate of just under 1% per year. Figure 2 illustrates the rates of population growth over the last ten years and projected rates to the year 2000.

Figure 2:

Population Growth Rates 1980 - 2000



Source: Statistics Canada

Population growth is due largely to high levels of immigration concentrating in the Lower Mainland where 80% of the immigrants coming to British Columbia settled in 1989. This trend will create a richly multicultural community by the end of the decade.

Of the 20,057 immigrants who came to the lower mainland in 1989, only 13.7% were from Europe, while 70.3% were from Asia. Twenty percent of the population is considered a visible minority in Vancouver, while 21% speak a language other than English as their mother tongue. To enable these new Canadians to participate in the economy and achieve integration and independence, social programs must be structured and delivered in ways which are sensitive and responsive.

The population increases in this region are also the result of the in-migration of people from other parts of Canada. In 1988, this accounted for approximately 20,000 new British Columbia residents, many of whom also settled in the Lower Mainland area.

The combined trends toward a greater cultural and racial mix and increased urbanization means that the region will be facing the challenges of a large and growing multi-cultural urban centre in the '90's. There will be an increasing requirement for cross-cultural services, including translation

and ethnic-specific programs. Because of the range of services required, close liaison with other ministries, agencies and service providers will be required to realize the maximum benefits for immigrants to region A.

The rate of population increase in the late 1980's has created a heavy demand for housing. This has contributed to recent increases in the cost of both purchasing and renting accommodation. The supply of low-cost rental housing has also been affected by high costs of land, high costs of money, and the municipal policies concerning zoning, infill and secondary suites. High housing costs create particular hardship and stress for families and singles on low and fixed incomes. The housing problems also impact quite directly on the ability of the ministry to deliver its services, particularly to recruit staff and develop contract resources. Figure 3 illustrates the types of shelter costs which may be experienced in two of the urban centres within region A.

Figure 3:

Shelter Costs

Average Family Income : $43,447 per year

Average Rent for a 2-Bedroom Apartment in Vancouver, April, 1990 : $723.00 per month

Average Price for a standard two-storey dwelling in Richmond in July, 1990: $230,000

Source: CMHC Victoria, Royal Lepage Survey of House Prices, July 1990

Fifty-eighty percent of the households in region A own their homes, and 42% are renters. Less than 1% live on reserves.

Throughout the entire region, just over 53% of the housing is made up of single family dwellings, 4% is apartment buildings of 5 storeys or more, and 42% is semi-detached, small apartment buildings and other types of multi-family accommodation.

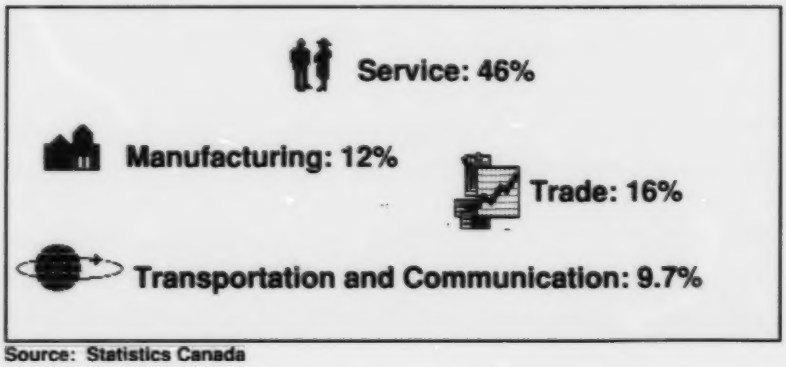
Due to the ongoing closure of institutions, clients with mental handicaps who are in transition to community living will continue to require ongoing assistance with accommodation and support services.

The region has a Native population living on reserves as well as a large Native population who have moved into the city from reserves in other parts of British Columbia and from other provinces and territories. The large Native population will require services which are sensitive to the cultural characteristics of the Native people. These include such things as daycare, foster and group homes, transition houses, alcohol/drug abuse and health services as well as more Urban Native Family and Child Services Units.

In 1986, 46.2% of the jobs in the region were in the service sector and this is expected to be the major area of economic growth within the region. The service sector tends to have a larger proportion of its labour force in low paying work than does the manufacturing sector. For those working in the service industry, low pay can create barriers to independence, particularly for people with young children who require daycare. The percentage of persons employed within the four major industries in region A is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4:

Major Employers



Source: Statistics Canada

Region B Vancouver - Howe Sound

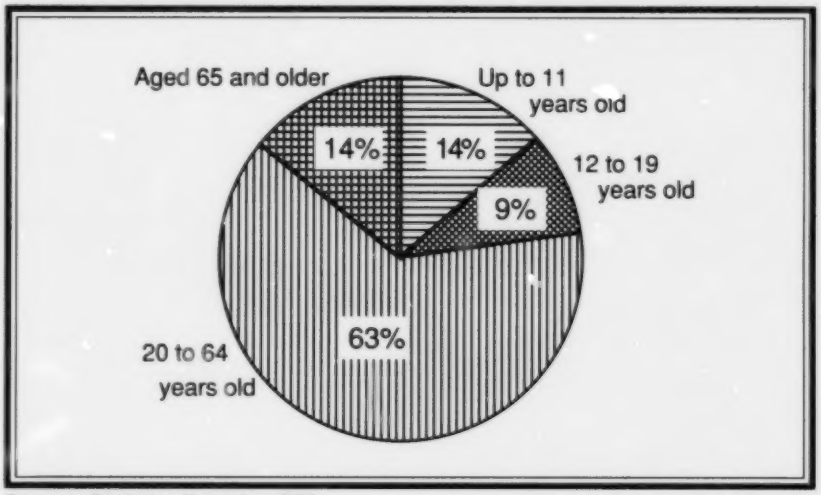
Population Characteristics

The total population of region B is approximately 293,868.

- There are 69,630 families
- 58% of the families have children living at home
- There is an average of 1.8 children per family
- 23% of families with children are single parent households.
- The median age of the population is 36.4 years.

Figure 5:

Population Distribution



Source: Statistics Canada, 1986

Trends and Implications

This region contains both the concentrated urban areas of Vancouver, North Vancouver and West Vancouver and the large, more sparsely populated areas of Howe Sound.

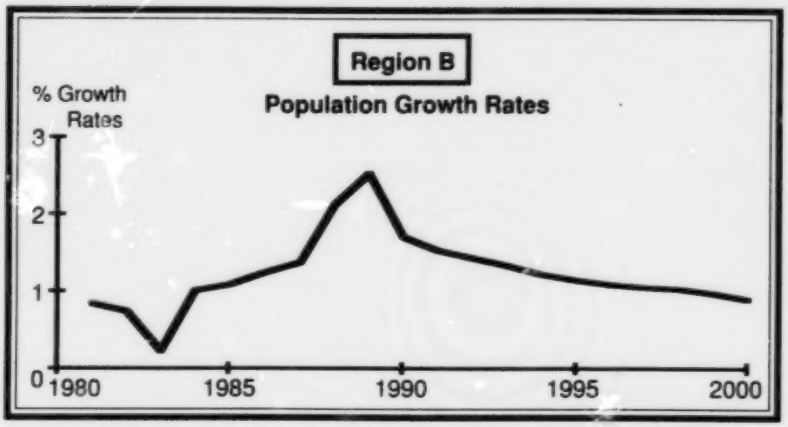
In the urban parts of this region, strong population growth is expected to continue. Most of the growth will result from immigration from other countries and in-migration from other parts of Canada. A large proportion of the immigrants coming to British Columbia come into the metropolitan Vancouver area, and an increasing proportion of new residents are of Asian origin. In Vancouver, there is also a high concentration of refugees with Asian and Central and South American origins. These trends, together with the increasing urbanization of the

provincial population, will create a diverse cultural mix and a new social profile for the city over the coming decade.

The large influx of immigrants and refugees will create special requirements in the region for such services as translation, and culturally sensitive daycare and support services. Special support and coordination among agencies and ministries will be required for the Central American refugees who are often victims of post-traumatic stress syndrome.

Figure 6:

Population Growth Rates 1980-2000



The strong demand for housing and current high interest rates are likely to keep housing costs high and rental vacancy rates low, at least in the short term. Because the stock of low-cost housing is also aging stock, the supply is expected to be affected by the demolition of older buildings, and the closure of hotels and rooming houses in the downtown core. The shortage of supply is exacerbated by the tendency for the large number of immigrants coming to British Columbia to settle, at least initially, in the urban parts of this region. Figure 7 illustrates the types of shelter costs which may be experienced in two urban centres in region B.

Figure 7:

Shelter Costs

Average Family Income: $43,641 per year

Average Rent for a 2-Bedroom Apartment in Vancouver, April, 1990 : $723.00 per month

Average Price for a standard two-storey dwelling in West Vancouver in July, 1990: $360,000

Source: CMHC Victoria; Royal Lepage Survey of House Prices, July 1990

The urban nature of the region is reflected in the distribution of dwelling types: 42% of dwellings are single detached houses, and 24% are apartments of 5 or more storeys. An additional 32% of accommodation is in lower density multi-family units such as small apartment buildings, duplexes, and fourplexes. Home owners represent 43% of the population; 53% are renters and 1.1% live on reserves.

The shortage in the supply of affordable housing, particularly in the urban core, puts pressure on income assistance clients and persons with fixed incomes. This will likely mean more movement of clients within and out of the region, full hostels, and extensive use of emergency resources. It also means that there will be difficulties in recruiting and retaining foster homes and contracted services in the region. The cost of housing is also expected to continue to be a concern in the Whistler area where local service sector jobs are relatively low paying. The cost of housing reflects the international standard of the ski resort.

There is a large Native population in the region. It is expected that there will be a continuing dialogue toward the goal of Native responsibility and control of social services. There will be an ongoing need to address such problems as "street kids", approximately 40% of whom are Native.

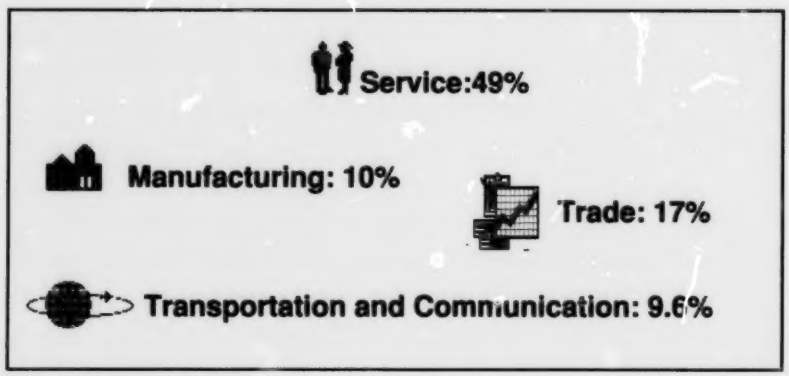
As the city becomes larger, there will be more people with alcohol, drug or mental health problems in downtown Vancouver, producing a need for special services for this client group. One disturbing trend has been an increase in babies born with Narcotic Addicted Syndrome.

As in region A, the fastest growing industry throughout region B is the service industry, which tends to produce relatively low-paying jobs. For the region as a whole, 49% of the jobs are presently in the service sector; 90% of new jobs are found in the service-producing businesses.

By comparison, goods-producing businesses, which include manufacturing, construction, agriculture and other primary production occupations, accounted for 10.7% of the new jobs created between October 1988 and October 1989.

Figure 8:

Major Employers



Source: Statistics Canada

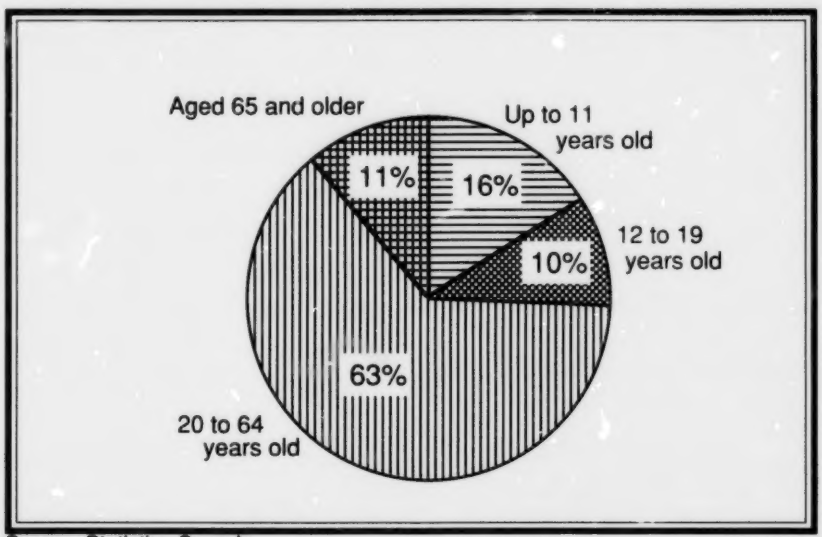
Region C Fraser North

Population Characteristics

The total population of region C is approximately 407,000.

- There are 99,590 families
- 62% of the families have children living at home
- There is an average of 1.8 children per family
- 20% of families with children are single parent households.
- The median age of the population is 36.4 years.

Figure 9:
Population Distribution



Source: Statistics Canada

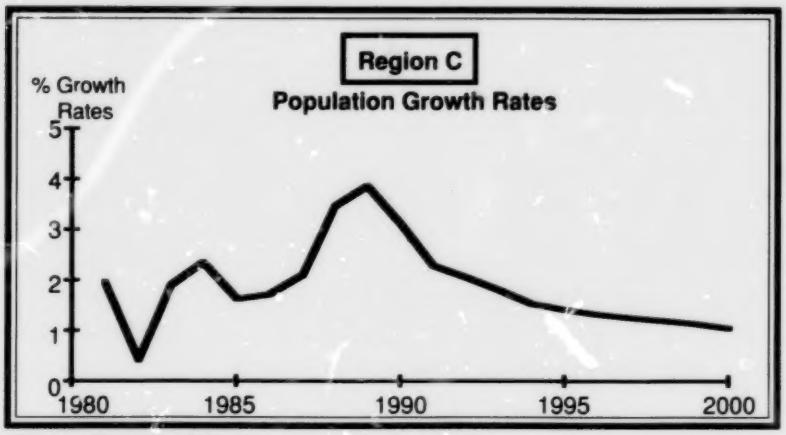
Trends and Implications

Region C is made up of the Lower Mainland communities of Burnaby, New Westminister, Coquitlam, Port Moody, Port Coquitlam, Maple Ridge, and Mission.

This region is experiencing rapid population growth, particularly of young families with young children who make up a large proportion of the region's population. It is expected that the area will continue to have a youthful population and there will continue to be large numbers of older teens in the area, as well as very young children. By 1995, it is expected that this region will have 13% of British Columbia's population under 19 years of age.

Figure 10:

Population Growth Rates 1980-2000



Source: Statistics Canada

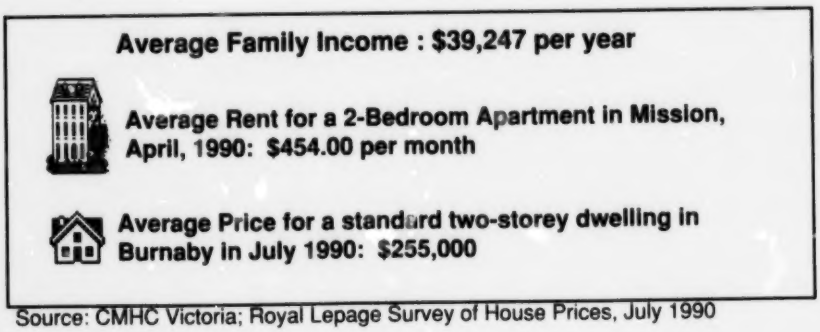
There is a strong demand for affordable housing to buy or rent, particularly housing which is suitable for young families. For example, the April 1990 CMHC statistics show a rental vacancy rate of less than 1% in Mission. Although this figure does not reflect the availability for rent of single family dwellings, condominiums or apartment buildings under 6 units, it does give an indication of the tight rental market.

Almost 55% of the housing in the region is made up of single detached dwellings, and 9% of housing is in apartment buildings of 5 or more storeys. The rest of the housing is in low-rise apartments and other types of low-density multi-family dwellings. Fifty-eight percent of the households are home owners and 42% are renters. Less than 1% of the population live on Native reserves.

The shortage of low-cost housing will strain the resources of those on fixed and low incomes, the mentally ill and the handicapped. For the ministry, this means that there will continue to be severe pressure on emergency resources, crisis grants and foster parents recruitment. Group home development and staff recruitment and retention will also be challenges for the ministry in the communities of region C.

Figure 11:

Shelter Costs

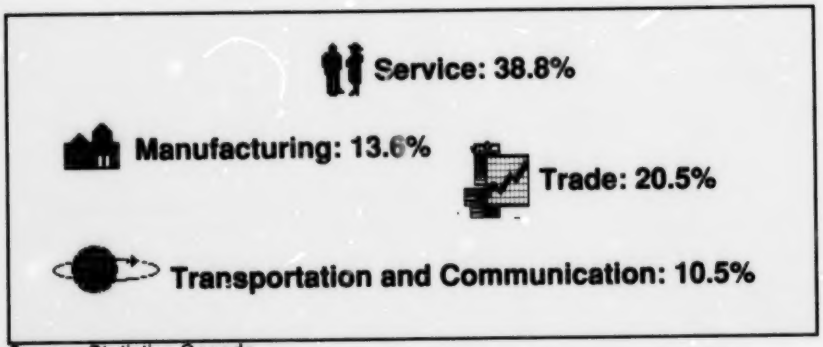

Average Family Income : $39,247 per year
Average Rent for a 2-Bedroom Apartment in Mission, April, 1990: $454.00 per month
Average Price for a standard two-storey dwelling in Burnaby in July 1990: $255,000

Source: CMHC Victoria; Royal Lepage Survey of House Prices, July 1990

The Fraser North region is also affected by the fact that most of the jobs created are in the low paying service industry. This creates particular difficulties for single parent families if wages cannot sustain the family and pay for daycare for the children.

Figure 12:

Major Employers



Source: Statistics Canada

The area is experiencing uneven urbanization with the development of large, upscale, high density condominium developments in some concentrated areas. Highway widening and the Skytrain extension have created new transportation patterns and opportunities in some areas, while other areas lack adequate public transportation services for clients who need to reach work or social services.

Region D Fraser South

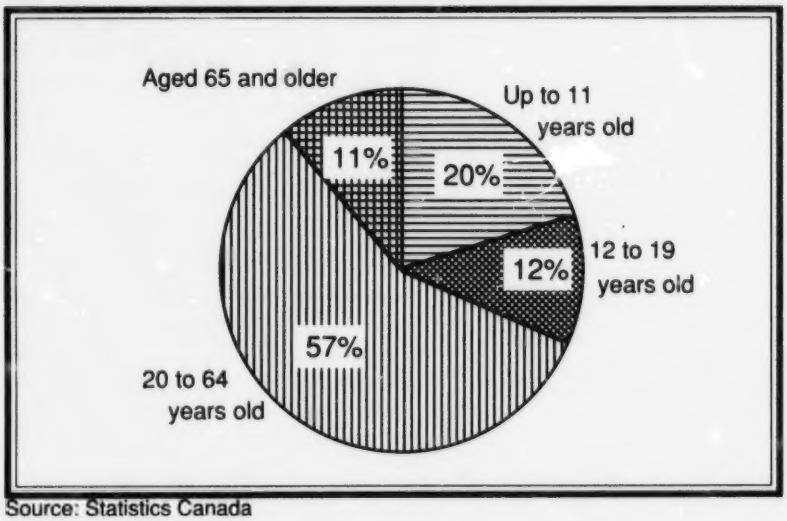
Population Characteristics

The total population of region D is approximately 425,698.

- There are 108,075 families
- 64% of the families have children living at home
- There is an average of 1.9 children per family
- 18% of families with children are single parent households
- The median age of the population is 34.5 years.

Figure 13:

Population Distribution



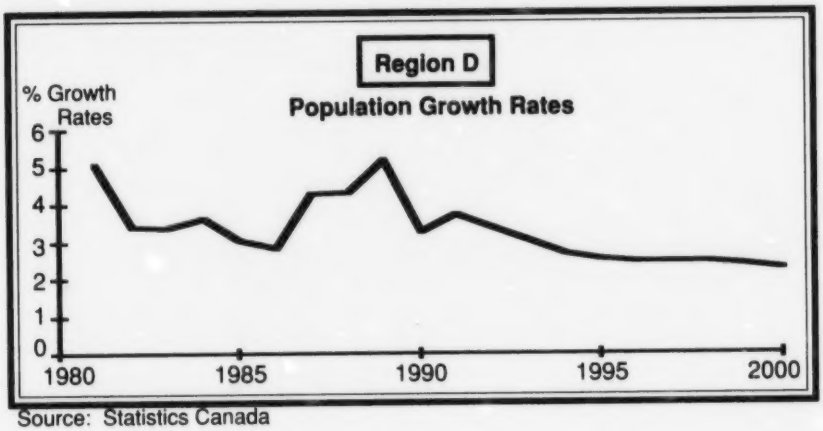
Source: Statistics Canada

Trends and Implications

This region has experienced the very rapid rate of population growth since 1986 of 22.7%. This pace is expected to continue through to 1991, followed by a slightly slower growth rate resulting in an additional 15% increase by 1996. Thirty percent of the population growth in the Lower Mainland was in Surrey, and the school age population is forecasted to increase by 30% in the next few years in some parts of the region. This rapid population growth will continue to have an impact on the ministry's ability to deliver social services and on social planning in general.

Figure 14:

Population Growth Rates 1980-2000



Source: Statistics Canada

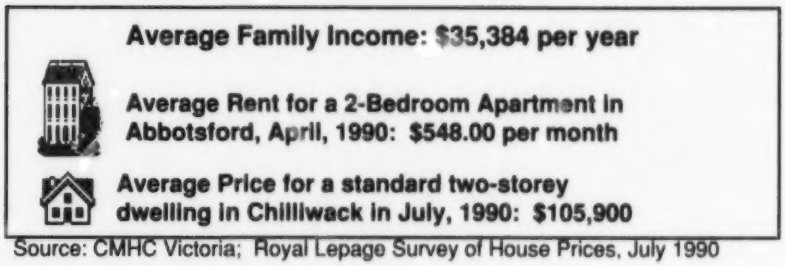
There is a growing ethnic diversity in the region, including a large number of people with East Indian backgrounds in Surrey and in the Matsqui-Abbotsford area. There is a large Native population in the Valley (Abbotsford-Chilliwack-Hope) and an increase in the urban Native population in north Surrey.

Both White Rock/South Surrey and the Matsqui-Abbotsford areas are becoming increasingly popular locations for seniors.

Because much of the population growth in the rest of the region will be made up of young families, there is a particularly strong demand for low and moderate cost housing, both to buy and to rent. There is a considerable demand for residential rental accommodation at all rent levels, a fact which is presently reflected in low rental vacancy rates as far east as Chilliwack. The shortage of housing may heighten demand for emergency housing for both families and singles.

Figure 15:

Shelter Costs


Average Family Income: $35,384 per year
Average Rent for a 2-Bedroom Apartment in Abbotsford, April, 1990: $548.00 per month
Average Price for a standard two-storey dwelling in Chilliwack in July, 1990: $105,900

Source: CMHC Victoria; Royal Lepage Survey of House Prices, July 1990

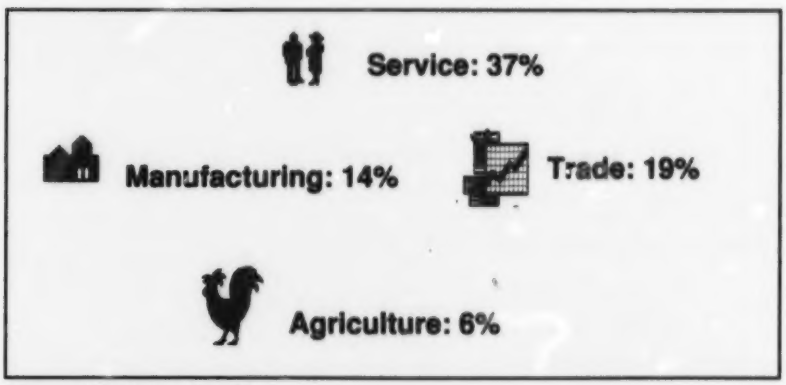
The cost of renting an apartment or buying a house in one of the communities in the region is illustrated in Figure 15.

Public transportation is becoming an increasingly important issue in the region. This is at a time when fuel costs continue to rise and there is more public awareness of the environmental price to pay for the use of the private car.

The major employers in region D are illustrated in Figure 16, according to the percentage of persons employed in the four major industries.

Figure 16:

Major Employers



Source: Statistics Canada

Region F Okanagan - Kootenay

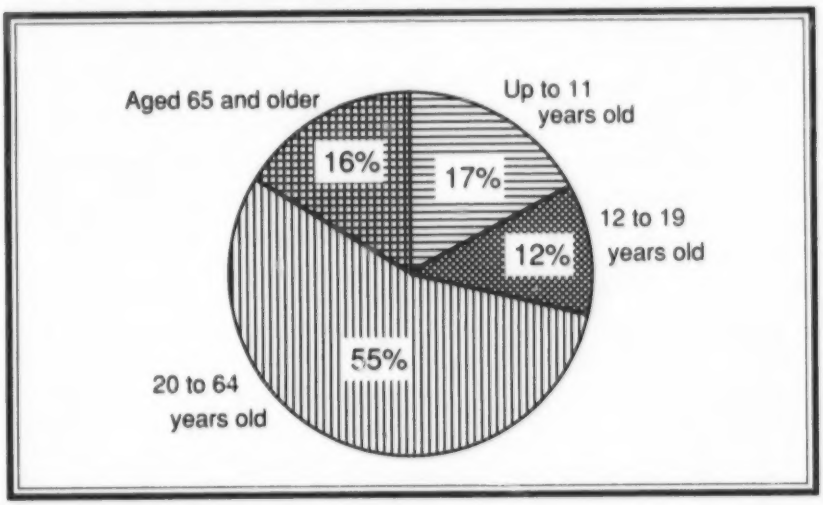
Population Characteristics

The total population of region F is approximately 535,000.

- There are 79,980 families
- 57% of the families have children living at home
- There is an average of 1.9 children per family
- 19% of families with children are single parent households
- The median age of the population is 37.7 years.

Figure 17:

Population Distribution



Source: Statistics Canada

Trends and Implications

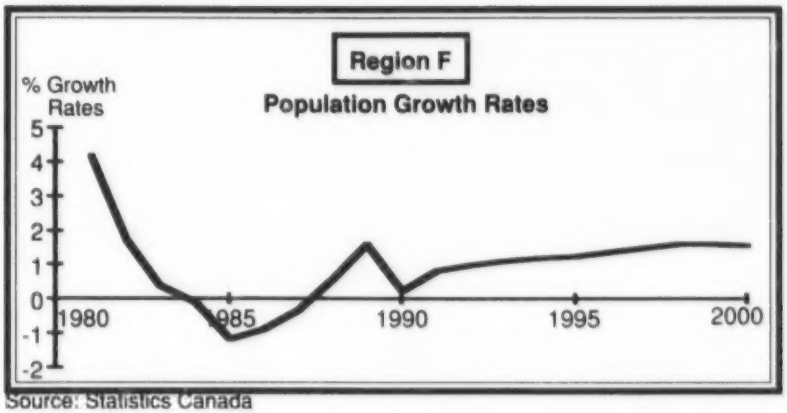
After a period of population decline in the early and mid 1980's, the Central Okanagan experienced a 4% per year growth in population during the last 2 years of the decade. This trend is expected to last for at least another three years.

Kelowna is booming and all forecasts are that this trend will continue as well. The rates of population growth for region F are illustrated in Figure 18.

The South Okanagan has a smaller population, and relies quite heavily on seasonal employment. There is expected to be a continuing increase in the older population as retired couples and families are attracted to the area by its mild climate and affordable housing.

Figure 18:

Population Growth Rates 1980-2000



Source: Statistics Canada

In the West Kootenay area, forestry, mining and tourism are the mainstays of the economy. There are a number of long-established ethnic communities in the area, as well as advocacy groups which have become numerous and sophisticated.

The economy of the East Kootenay area is in transition. Mining, forestry, and agriculture have been the primary industries; however, the resources sector of the economy is experiencing difficulty, and there have been some recent mine closures. The tourism industry is developing, particularly in golf, guiding and outfitting, and skiing.

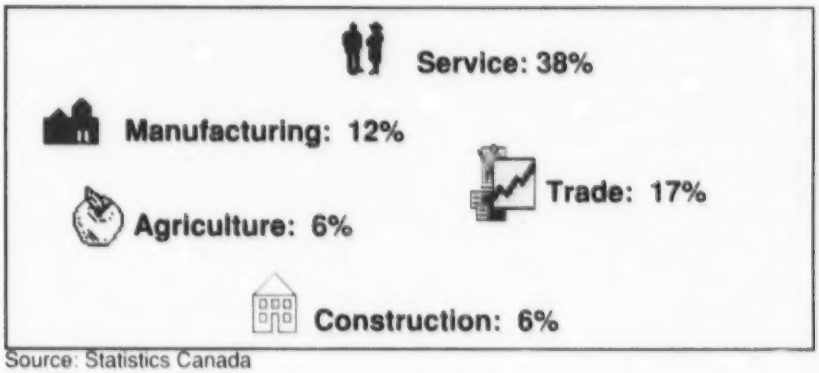
The resource industries (forestry, mining and agriculture) continue to provide a substantial part of the economic base of the region. However, the service industry is the fastest growing sector of the economy in the Central Okanagan and is the major employer. The construction industry is also experiencing tremendous growth, particularly for housing.

The changing economic base has meant rises in unemployment in some areas. In other areas, unemployment is not a problem as service sector jobs have increased. However, these jobs are generally poorly paid and seasonal. As parts of the region increasingly become retirement communities, there will be a need for an

adjustment of services in order to meet the need for more seniors health care and to develop age appropriate programs with Seniors Counsellors.

Figure 19:

Major Employers



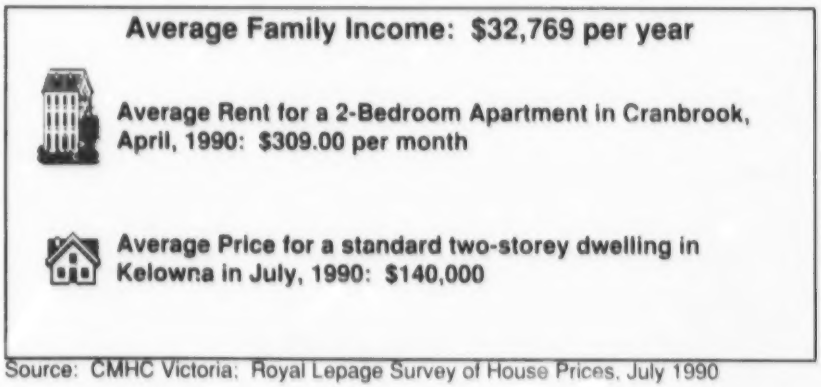
Source: Statistics Canada

The major employers are illustrated in Figure 19 according to the percentage of the total workforce which is employed in each of the five major industries.

Inadequate public transportation in the region makes it difficult for many ministry clients to find housing which is both affordable and within reach of places of employment. This creates a significant barrier to employment and independence in some areas. The cost of shelter is illustrated below compared to the average family income for the region.

Figure 20:

Shelter Costs


Average Family Income: $32,769 per year
Average Rent for a 2-Bedroom Apartment in Cranbrook, April, 1990: $309.00 per month
Average Price for a standard two-storey dwelling in Kelowna in July, 1990: $140,000

Source: CMHC Victoria; Royal Lepage Survey of House Prices, July 1990

Region G Central Interior

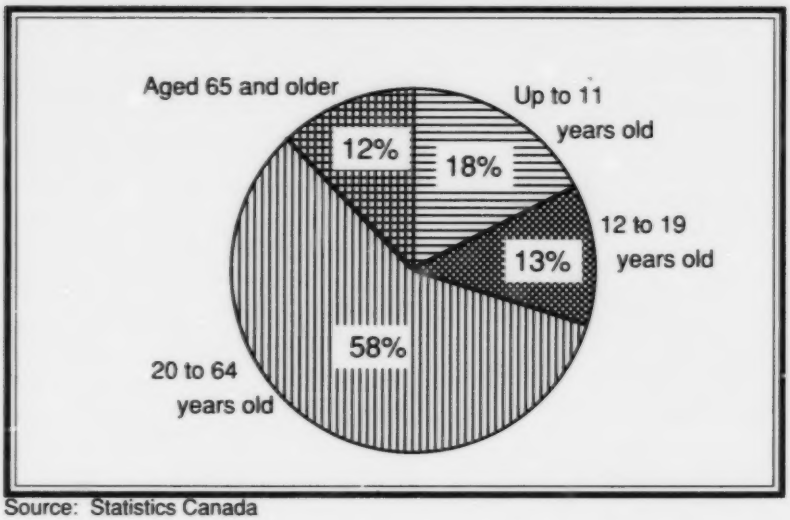
Population Characteristics

The total population of region G is approximately 202,419.

- There are 55,255 families
- 63% of the families have children living at home
- There is an average of 1.9 children per family
- 19% of families with children are single parent households.
- The median age of the population is 34 years.

Figure 21:

Population Distribution



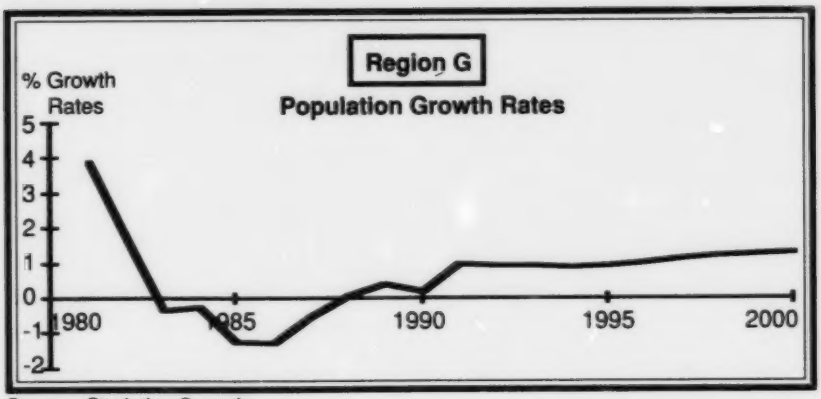
Source: Statistics Canada

Trends and Implications

This region has experienced relatively slow population growth rates in the 80's, but this trend is shifting as the Okanagan Valley becomes increasingly popular for the retired and semi-retired from the Lower Mainland and from other parts of the country. There is also a group composed of young professionals and entrepreneurs coming into the region who are looking at the whole Okanagan Valley as their employment area. The population of young children is increasing due to the "baby boom echo". Many of them are living in single parent families.

Figure 22:

Population Growth Rates 1980 - 2000



Source: Statistics Canada

Housing is reasonably affordable throughout the region but there are significant differences from one part of the region to another. For example, housing is noticeably cheaper in the smaller communities than in Kamloops and Vernon.

Figure 23:

Shelter Costs

Average Family Income: $32,908 per year

Average Rent for a 2-Bedroom Apartment in Vernon, April, 1990: $418.00 per month

Average Price for a standard two-storey dwelling in Kamloops in July, 1990: $87,000

Source: CMHC Victoria; Royal Lepage Survey of House Prices, July, 1990.

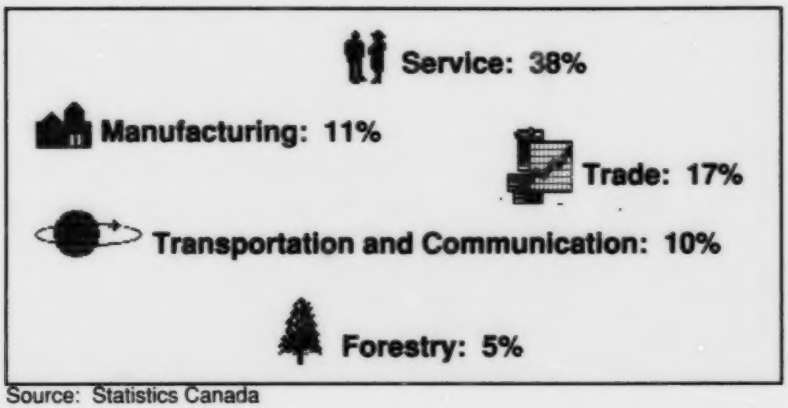
The region's economy has a strong and expanding service sector. There will be growth in the number of jobs related to the new 40-bed Youth Containment Facility in Kamloops, the upgrading of Cariboo College to degree-granting status, and the construction of a 100 bed extended care/long term care resource in Salmon Arm.

The smaller communities, on the other hand, will be significantly affected by the present difficulties in the forest industry. Increases in those applying for Income Assistance is expected.

The major employers are illustrated in Figure 24.

Figure 24:

Major Employers



Source: Statistics Canada

The increase in the number of retirees and elderly residents means the region will experience a rapidly aging population with implications for certain social services. The general aging trend applies also to persons with mental handicaps who will present special social service and health service challenges associated with their aging. Population growth resulting from migration from the Lower Mainland will mean increasing demands for ministry services.

Region H Prince George - Cariboo

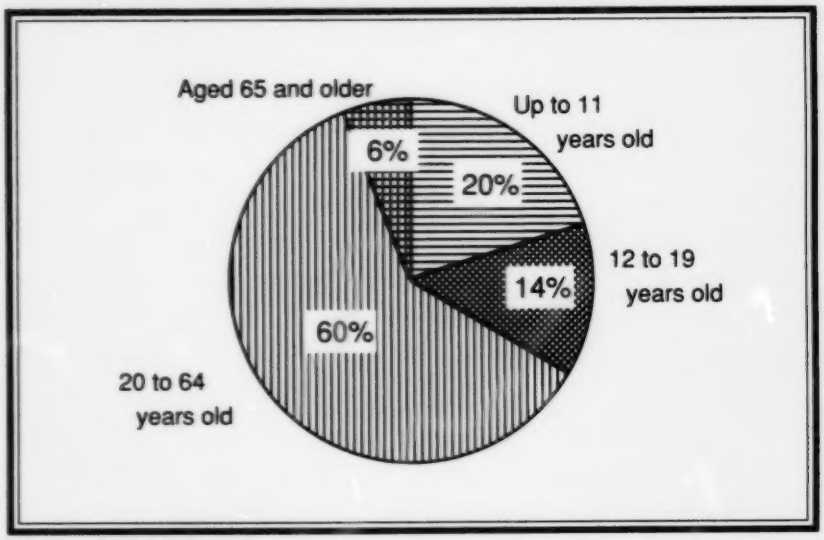
Population Characteristics

The total population of region H is approximately 171,305.

- There are 45,710 families
- 72% of the families have children living at home
- There is an average of 2 children per family
- 17% of families with children are single parent households.
- The median age of the population is 29.8 years.

Figure 25:

Population Distribution



Source: Statistics Canada

Trends and Implications

Region H has a large geographic area, with a small population. Almost half of the people live in Prince George.

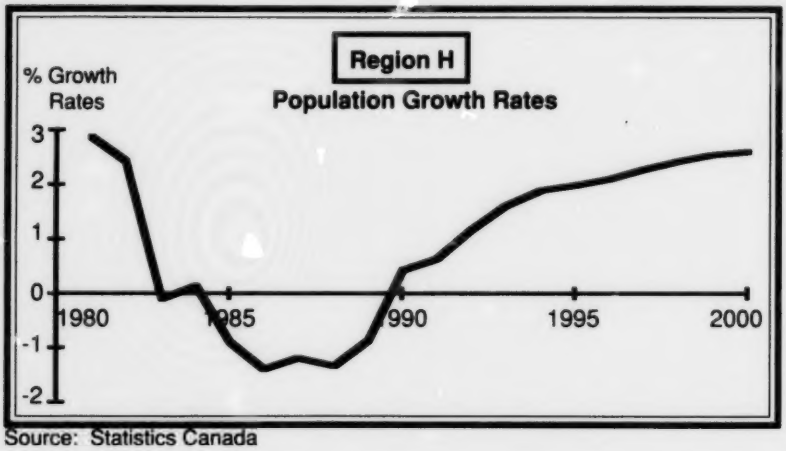
The population is relatively young with well over half being under 35 years of age. Families in region H tend to be made up of younger children than are families in other parts of the province.

A large and increasing percentage of the population is Native (10%) . In some ministry offices, Natives represent a significant majority of the clients.

There was a negative rate of population growth in the 1980's in region H, to the point where the total population decreased in the latter half of the decade. Over the past two years, this trend has reversed and it is expected that there will be a continuation of an upward trend over the next few years. Figure 26 illustrates the rate of population growth between 1980 and the year 2000.

Figure 26:

Population Growth Rates 1980 - 2000

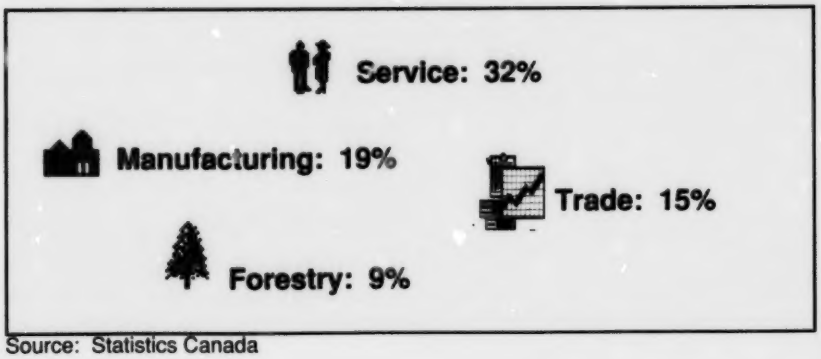


Source: Statistics Canada

This region has experienced very high unemployment rates. In 1986 unemployment reached 17.2%. The cyclical and seasonal nature of jobs in the region has been an issue for some time, particularly in the logging, fishing, and farming industries. This often means that there is less opportunity for many clients to move towards independence. There are limited but expanding opportunities for employment in the service sector.

Figure 27:

Major Employers

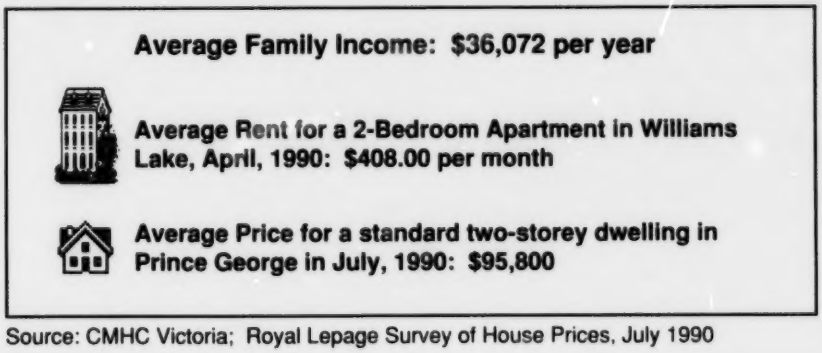


Source: Statistics Canada

On the whole, there is a strong supply of affordable housing, and the percentage of households who own their home is higher than for the province as a whole. Shelter costs are reasonable for both home owners and renters. Almost half of home owners have monthly mortgage payments under $400, and of these, almost 30% have mortgage payments which are under $200 per month. Almost half of tenants pay rents ranging from $400 and $700 per month, and a further 40% pay rents of between $200 and $400 per month.

Figure 28:

Shelter Costs


Average Family Income: $36,072 per year
Average Rent for a 2-Bedroom Apartment in Williams Lake, April, 1990: $408.00 per month
Average Price for a standard two-storey dwelling in Prince George in July, 1990: $95,800

Source: CMHC Victoria; Royal Lepage Survey of House Prices, July 1990

Prince George is unique within the region as the major northern service centre. The city has some specialist services and a reasonably large community of professionals. The city is not as isolated as the rest of the region since there are frequent direct flights to Vancouver.

Region J The North

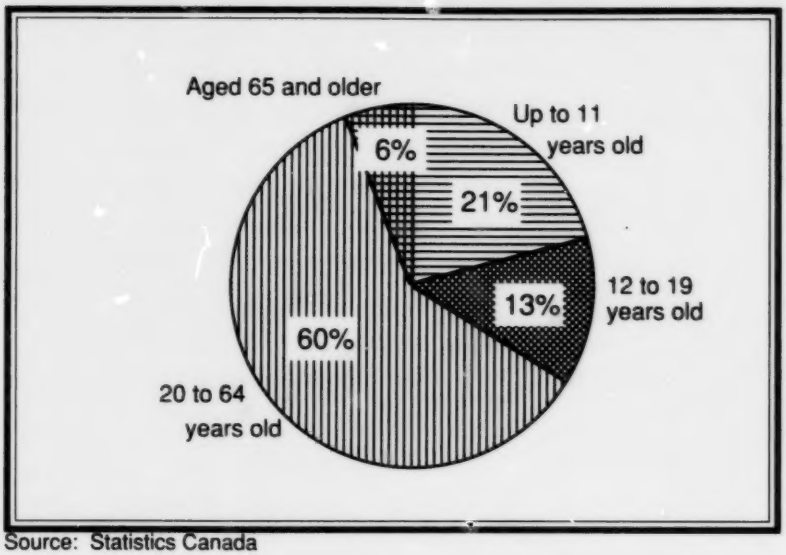
Population Characteristics

The total population of region J is approximately 134,512

- There are 35,005 families
- 76% of the families have children living at home
- There is an average of 2 children per family
- 16% of families with children are single parent households
- The median age of the population is 28.9 years

Figure 29:

Population Distribution



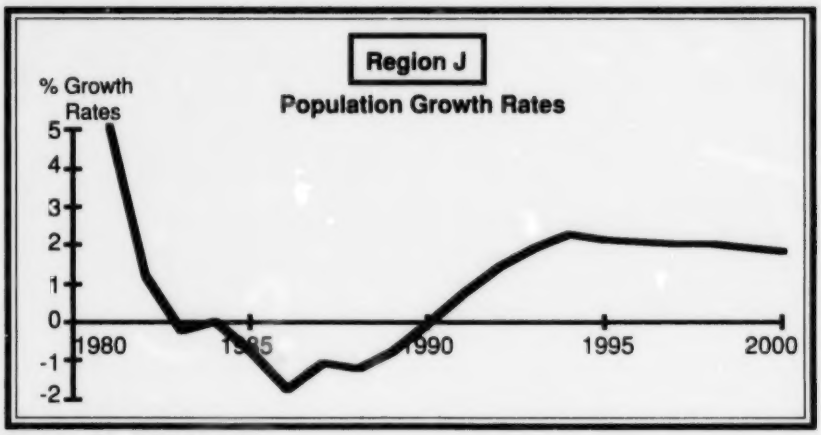
Source: Statistics Canada

Trends and Implications

Region J has the largest territory and the smallest population of any region in the province. There is no urban regional centre and no community over 20,000 in population. Many of the population characteristics are similar to region H, and differ in the same ways from the rest of the province.

Figure 30:

Population Growth Rates 1980 - 2000



Source: Statistics Canada

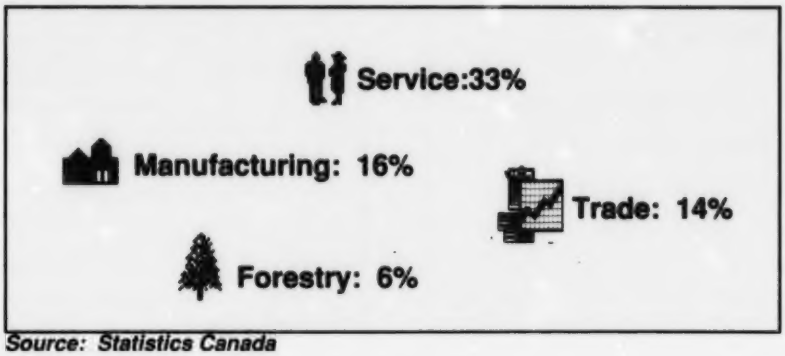
Compared to all other regions, the population is shrinking, is younger, has a higher percentage of men, and has a generally less well-educated labour force. Both regions have relatively more families with children than is characteristic of other regions around the province.

The economy of the region varies from logging and fishing in the Northwest, to oil and farming in The Peace River District, to manufacturing in Fort Nelson. The gas exploration in the Peace River area and the Alcan expansion in Terrace/Kitimat have caused the Fort St. John and Terrace areas to experience recent positive economic growth. However, the unemployment rate remains high at 16.8%, which is the second highest unemployment rate in the province.

The major employers are illustrated in Figure 31.

Figure 31:

Major Employers



Source: Statistics Canada

There is an adequate supply of affordable housing in the North, and land costs are considered to be reasonable. The average price for a house compared to the average family income is illustrated below.

Figure 32:

Shelter Costs

Average Family Income: $37,707 per year

Average Price for a standard two-storey dwelling in Terrace in July, 1990: $94,000

(Typical rent figure unavailable)

Source: Royal Lepage Survey of House Prices, July, 1990

At approximately 19%, a large and increasing proportion of the population is Native. The Natives in Region J are increasingly interested in and committed to assuming responsibilities for services such as child welfare. For the ministry, this means that there will be an increasing need for Native staff within the ministry, and for a high degree of understanding of Native culture, mores and aspirations among non-Native staff. There will also be a need for Native partners as caregivers and foster parents.

Region K The North Island

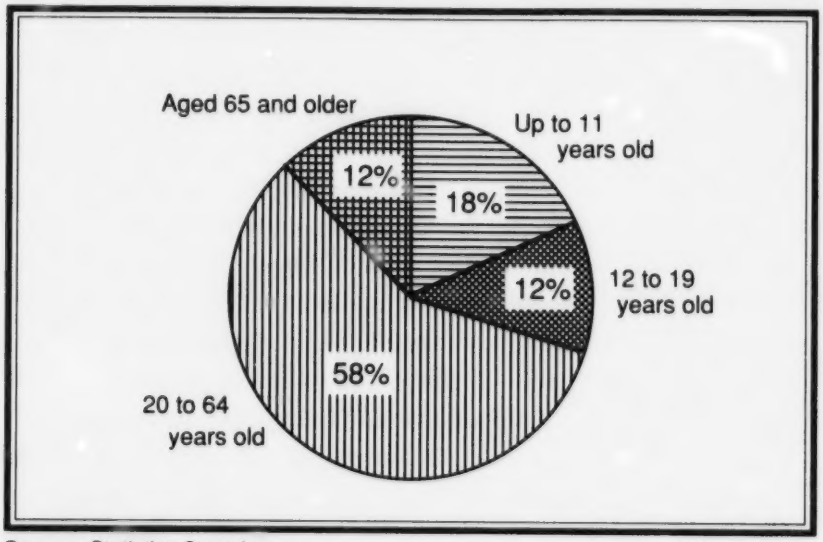
Population Characteristics

The total population of region K is approximately 228,883.

- There are 63,005 families
- 60% of the families have children living at home
- There is an average of 1.9 children per family
- 20% of families with children are single parent households.
- The median age of the population is 35.3 years.

Figure 33:

Population Distribution



Source: Statistics Canada

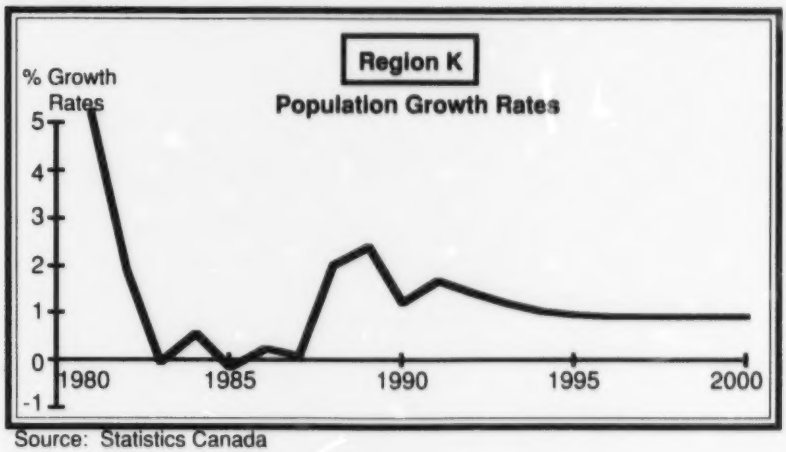
Trends and Implications

The seniors population has increased rapidly as the North Island has become a destination for retirees. For example, the population of Parksville is expected to increase from its present 30,000 to 50,000 by the year 2000.

Figure 34 illustrates the rapid decline in population growth which occurred in the early 1980's in the North Island. The growth rate has recovered over the past 2 years and it is expected that the population will continue to increase steadily through to the year 2000.

Figure 34:

Population Growth Rates 1980 - 2000



Source: Statistics Canada

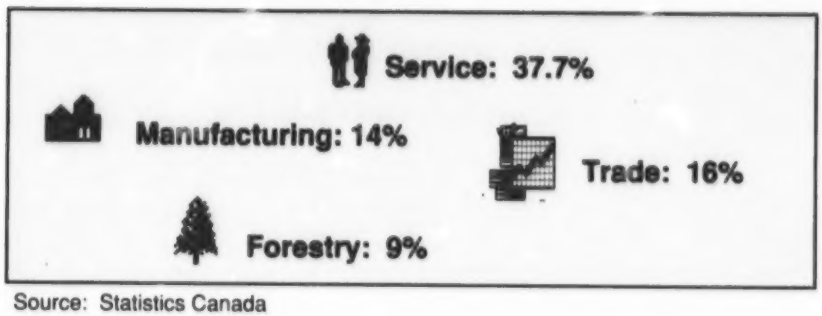
The economy of North Vancouver Island has been dominated by the resource sector in the past, and the forestry industry is still a major employer. Current trends in the forest industry show record productions, fewer jobs, major environmental concerns and the potential impact of free trade. Overall, the region is still heavily dependent on primary industries, and it is therefore particularly susceptible to economic downturns. Unemployment rates in the North Island have generally been higher than in the rest of the Province.

The service sector accounted for 37.7% of the jobs in 1988, and 70% of the growth in jobs. Within that sector, most jobs in the North Island tend to be in health, education, tourism, retirement services and financial services. The economy of the North Island is likely to be positively affected over the next few years by the new natural gas pipeline, the improved island highway, and mill upgrade in Gold River and AC Mokko Mill in Port Alberni.

The trend toward service sector employment is having an impact on single parents who are receiving temporary assistance and are frequently not succeeding in achieving independence due to low wage levels and a shortage of affordable housing.

Figure 35:

Major Employers



Source: Statistics Canada

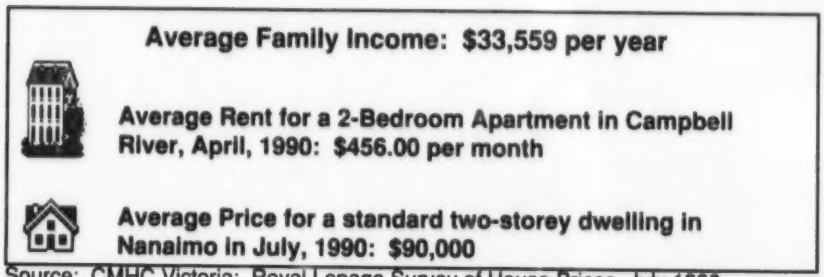
There is expected to be an increase in the high-paid, high skill and low-paid, low skill jobs; and a decrease in high-paid, low skill jobs. Because of this trend, clients with low educations will remain on temporary assistance for longer periods. This will have implications for education and training programs.

There is a large Native population in the region, about half of whom live on reserves. The largest proportion of Natives are youths and young families. The age makeup of the Native population suggests that there is a growing need for increased Native involvement in child welfare services in the region. On the West Coast of Vancouver Island, child welfare services are now delivered by the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council through a joint agreement with the provincial government, the federal government and the tribal council.

Rental housing vacancy rates have been less than 1% in Nanaimo and 0% in Parksville. Housing for low income families is particularly scarce. There is a need for affordable housing for various family sizes in all communities. The City of Nanaimo is addressing its housing needs through the implementation of a Rental Housing Strategy.

Figure 36:

Shelter Costs


Average Family Income: $33,559 per year
Average Rent for a 2-Bedroom Apartment in Campbell River, April, 1990: $456.00 per month
Average Price for a standard two-storey dwelling in Nanaimo in July, 1990: $90,000

Source: CMHC Victoria; Royal Lepage Survey of House Prices, July 1990

Region L The South Island

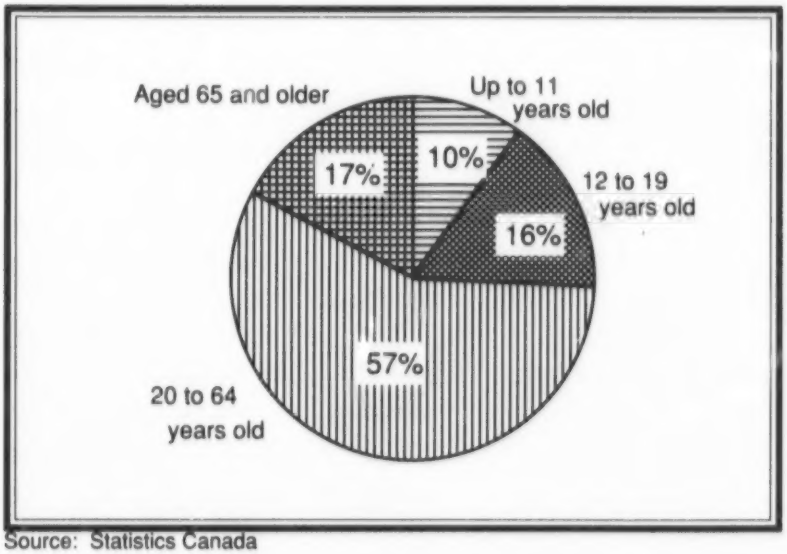
Population Characteristics

The total population of region L is approximately 323,012.

- There are 85,935 families
- 55% of the families have children living at home
- There is an average of 1.8 children per family
- 23% of families with children are single parent households
- The median age of the population is 38.4 years.

Figure 37:

Population Distribution



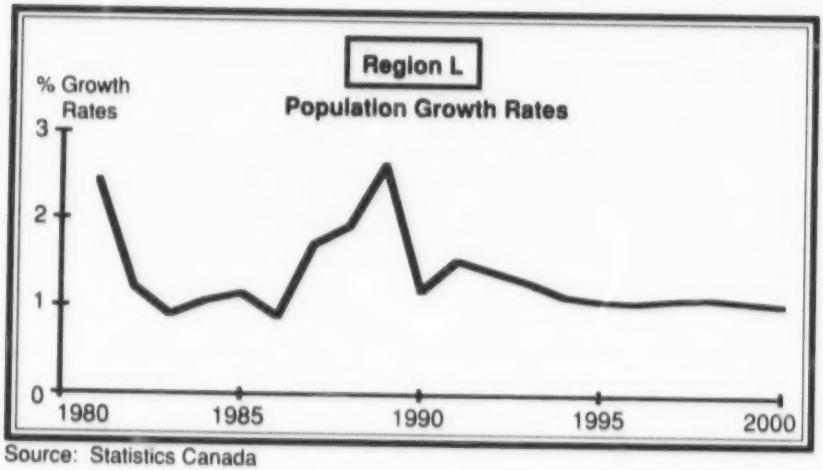
Source: Statistics Canada

Trends and Implications

The South Island has had a reputation as a retirement community and as such it has a larger proportion of seniors than elsewhere in the province. There have been steady increases in the population as a whole in the region, primarily as a result of in-migration from other parts of Canada. The rate of population growth since 1980 and projected to the year 2000 are illustrated in Figure 38.

Figure 38:

Population Growth Rates 1980 - 2000



Source: Statistics Canada

For the ministry, the aging of the population will mean that there will be fewer people within the community who will be likely to participate as partners in programs such as foster parents. The changing demographics will mean that the ministry will have to work closely with the Ministry of Health and with the ministry's partners in the community in order that the government programs and services keep pace with the changing needs of seniors.

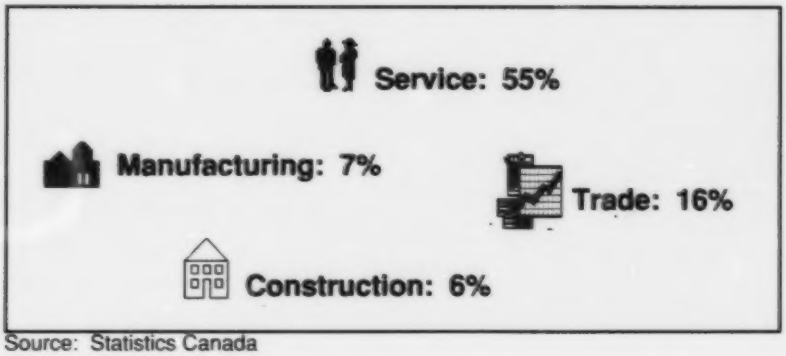
Victoria and the other communities of the Capital Regional District have a unique employment structure because of the presence of the provincial legislature, the supporting government ministries and the federal military establishments. The major employer of women in the region is the government. The South Island also has the highest level of female self-employment in Canada.

The service sector, particularly tourism, is the major growth area for new jobs. Traditionally, this type of employment is relatively low-paying; however, the increase in the financial and head office services should also provide more high-skill, high

paid job opportunities. According to Employment and Immigration Canada information published in December 1989, the employment areas where there is growth potential are in accounting, computer work of all kinds, and health care. These are all areas which require particular skills and which pay well. The employment structure of the South Island is illustrated in Figure 29 according to the percentage of the workforce employed in the four major industries.

Figure 39:

Major Employers

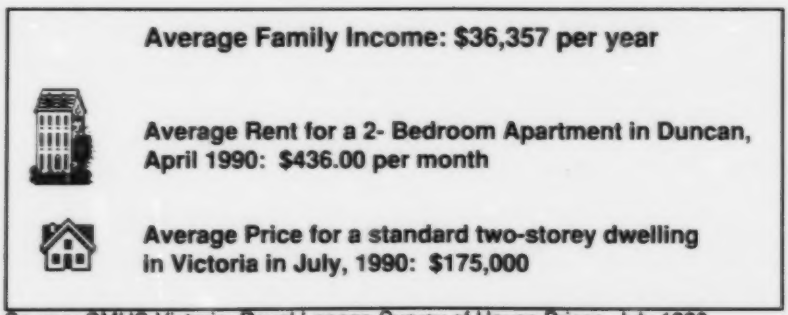


Source: Statistics Canada

Housing costs within the region are relatively high, and rental vacancy rates were below 1% in April, 1990. The problems of housing shortages are being addressed by the Capital Regional District through their Rental Housing Strategy.

Figure 40:

Shelter Costs


Average Family Income: $36,357 per year
Average Rent for a 2- Bedroom Apartment in Duncan, April 1990: $436.00 per month
Average Price for a standard two-storey dwelling in Victoria in July, 1990: $175,000

Source: CMHC Victoria; Royal Lepage Survey of House Prices, July 1990

Six Native bands, including the largest Native band in the province, are located in Region L. There is also a growing urban Native population in the communities of the Capital Regional District.

The Commonwealth Games of 1994 will impact increasingly on the social and economic makeup of the region - before, during and after the event.

Section II: The Provincial Perspective

The ministry will continue to work toward regional sufficiency to serve its clients and maximize the potential of its partnerships with local communities around the province.

The regional environmental scans are an essential part of that commitment. The information provided by the staff in the regional offices will be essential to the process of responding to local needs.

However, there are also common issues which affect people in every region of the province. These issues will provide the focus for the provincial policy and program development in the ministry in the 1990's. The following sections include brief descriptions of some of the major economic and social issues which will affect the ministry's policy development during the fiscal year 1991-92.

THE ECONOMY: 1991-92 OUTLOOK

One of the factors which affects the demand for the ministry's programs and services is the state of the economy - international, national and provincial. In order to plan for the most effective delivery of services, it is vital to be aware of the potential impact of the economy on ministry clients. The following is a brief overview of the provincial economy based on information provided by the Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations in April and October, 1990, and the Autumn 1990 report of the Conference Board of Canada.

Trends.

It is expected that, after 3 years of economic boom, real economic growth will slow from a forecasted 3% increase in the provincial real Gross Domestic Product in 1990 to about 1.5% for 1991. In-migration, which is a primary source of economic strength, is expected to continue. The population of the province is forecast to reach 3.2 million by the end of 1992.

Figure 41:

Labour Market Indicators, October, 1990

Selected Indicators of the Changing Labour Market

		Population '000's	Net Migration '000's	Unemployment Rate %	Productivity (% change)
Actual					
	1987	2,925	30.2	11.9	2.1
	1988	2,980	47.1	10.3	-0.4
	1989	3,053	59.4	9.1	-1.4
Forecast					
	1990	3,130	55.6	8.0	0.5
	1991	3,203	47.0	8.6	0.7
	1992	3,268	42.5	8.9	1.3
	1993	3,329	45.0	8.6	0.3
	1994	3,390	52.0	8.2	0.1

Source: Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations, October 1990

This represents an annual average growth rate of just over 1.7%. Some of the indicators which measure economic growth in British Columbia are shown in Figure 41.

One important issue affecting the economic forecast for the fiscal year 1991-92 is the impact of the Federal Goods And Services Tax (GST), beginning on January 1, 1991. The tax is expected by some to have a negative impact on the economy for the first 12 to 18 months by adding 1% or more to inflation.

Among other things, the 7% GST will apply to the selling price of newly constructed housing and of substantially renovated housing. However, more than 95% of all new home buyers will qualify for the GST housing rebate, which will be equal to 2.5 % of tax on homes priced up to $350,000.

The price of oil could also be a major economic issue for 1991-92. The severity of the economic impact of the Persian Gulf crisis will depend on whether prices remain at high levels and on the length of any actual oil supply disruption.

High interest rates in 1990 have caused domestic demand to decline. However, interest rates are expected to reduce gradually in 1991 and 1992. A softening commodity market, a strong Canadian dollar and a slower rate of growth in the rest of North America are expected to contribute to a continued slowing of economic growth into 1991.

From June 1989 to June 1990, unemployment rates declined in all regions of the province with the exception of the Kootenay-Columbia region where the unemployment rate increased in that period by 1.1 percentage points. During the same period, the Metro Vancouver rate dropped from 6.7% to 5.9%, while the rate for the greater Victoria area dropped from 7.8% to 6.7%.

Figure 42:

Unemployment Rates for B.C. Economic Regions*

Unemployment Rates by Economic Region

	June, 1989	June, 1990
Kootenay-Columbia	10.1	11.2
Okanagan-Boundary	11.7	10.2
Thompson-Lillooet	13.1	10.4
Lower Mainland	7.0	6.2
Vancouver Island	8.9	7.9
Central Interior	9.9	9.6
Northeast-Northwest	8.8	8.5
Metro Vancouver	6.7	5.9
Metro Victoria	7.8	6.7

Source: Labour Force Survey, Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, June, 1990.

**Because of sampling variability, the figures for these areas may not be accurate*

Unemployment in the province is generally expected to remain low. The Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations is expecting that the unemployment rate, which has been 8.0% on average in 1990, will increase slightly to 8.6% in 1991. This would reverse the trend of annual decreases in the unemployment rate over the last 6 years.

It is expected that there will be large regional variations in unemployment rates around the province and in performance among industrial sectors. The trade and service sectors are the strongest areas of growth in most regions of the province. In terms of contribution to the provincial GDP, the largest increases to date have been in the finance, insurance, and real estate industries.

Employment in the major industrial sectors is illustrated in Figure 43.

Figure 43:

Employment by Industry, June 1990

Numbers of Employees, expressed in 000's, in Major Industries.

Industry	June, 1989	June, 1990	% Change
Primary (including Agriculture)	92	73	-20.7
Manufacturing	188	181	-3.7
Construction	107	109	1.9
Transportation/ Communication/ Utilities	129	131	1.6
Trade	268	292	9.0
Services (including Government)	690	714	3.5
Total	1475	1499	1.6

Source: Labour Force Survey, Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, June 1990.

Following trends in the rest of Canada and the United States, the number of housing starts for British Columbia is expected to decline somewhat in 1991 from those in 1990. The number of housing starts is a particularly important economic indicator for British Columbia due to the powerful negative impact on the forest industry of any reduction in the demand for building products. However, the resource industry is in a better state to handle increased debt than it was in the early 1980's. The actual and estimated future number of housing starts in British Columbia, Canada, and the United States are shown in Figure 44.

The affordability and availability of housing for purchase and for rent will continue to be an issue for 1991-92, particularly in the major urban centres. The demand will continue to be strong due to the number of migrants coming to British Columbia from within and outside Canada.

Figure 44:

Housing Starts in British Columbia, Canada, and the U.S.A.

Number of Housing Starts and %age Change from previous year

		British Columbia		Canada		U. S. A.	
		000's	%	000's	%	000's	%
Actual							
	1987	28.9	39.9	246.0	23.1	1634	-9.5
	1988	30.5	5.3	222.6	-9.5	1488	-8.9
	1989	38.9	27.6	215.4	-3.2	1376	-7.5
Forecast							
	1990	38.9	-2.3	180.0	-16.4	1275	-7.3
	1991	30	-21.1	165.0	-8.3	1350	5.9
	1992	28.5	-5.0	180.0	9.1	1500	11.1
	1993	28.5	0.0	180.0	0.0	1500	3.3
	1994	28.5	0.0	180.0	0.0	1500	0.0

Source: Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations, October 1990

Implications

A downturn in the provincial economy will put increased pressure on ministry services, particularly the Programs for Independence. During the recession period of the early 1980's, the ministry's income assistance caseload more than doubled. Despite the improvement in the economy over the past 3 years, the caseload remains at almost twice the pre-1982 levels.

Almost two-thirds of the clients presently receiving income assistance are classified as "employable". However, most of the new jobs which have been created during 1988 and 1989 in most regions of the province have been in the service sector and in small businesses. It is expected that this trend will continue. In times of economic downturn, these jobs are particularly vulnerable. Therefore, a slowing in the economy could cause a further increase in ministry clients for programs such as Temporary Assistance. This program provides the temporary financial benefits needed while a recipient is between jobs and has exhausted all other sources of income. The groups most affected are single parents, children and women.

A recession can also have indirect effects on the ministry. A lower Gross Domestic Product means lower government revenues and, potentially, fewer resources available for discretionary government programs.

Employment initiatives which rely on private sector participation may be affected as well. Companies which are not expanding may be unable to participate in programs which require employers to hire new staff, pay a portion of the wages and provide the supervision and training.

Family Maintenance programs may also be affected by a slower economy. It is expected that the program workload will continue to increase. However, in a slower economy, more unemployment may mean that spouses do not have the income to meet their family maintenance responsibilities.

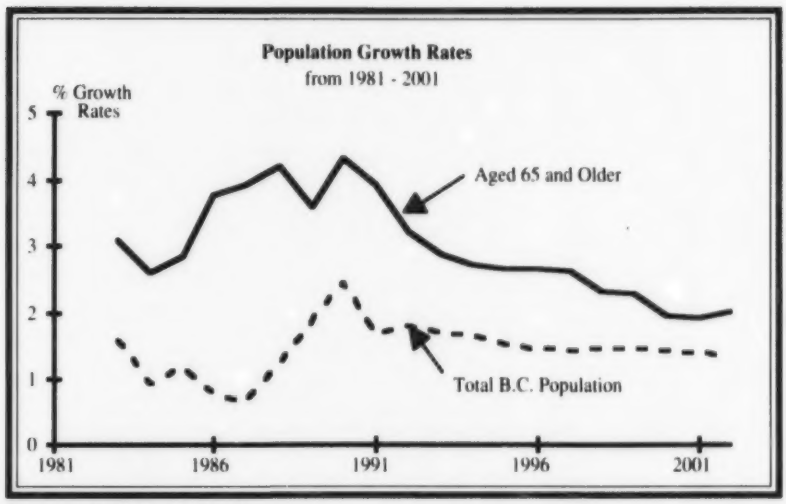
AN AGING POPULATION

Trends

The aging of the population will affect the ministry's policies in a number of ways. The seniors population in the province is growing faster that any other segment of the population. The very old age group (those over 85 years of age) is growing even faster.

Figure 45:

Population Growth Rates 1981-2001



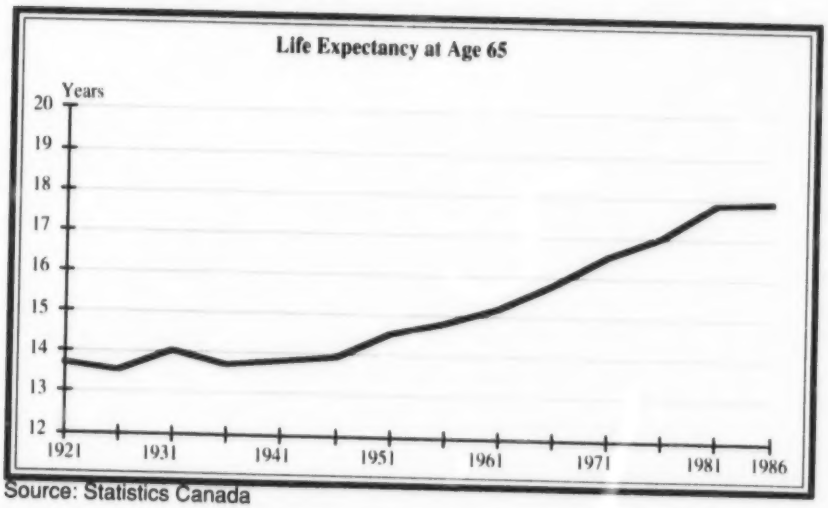
Source: Statistics Canada

The population throughout the province is aging as a result of a lower fertility rate than in the past, and as the large "baby boom" generation becomes older. The first of the "baby boom" will turn 65 in the year 2011. Adding to the aging resident population are the seniors who are migrating to British Columbia from other provinces. During the first three quarters of 1990, British Columbia and Alberta received the highest net inflow of seniors of any province in Canada. The trend toward an aging population is particularly evident in those regions of the province which are attractive to retirees.

Life expectancy among the elderly is also increasing. Figure 46 shows that the increase in life expectancy among those who have reached the age of 65 has increased by over 4 years since 1921. This means that, in 1921, the life expectancy at age 65 was 13.7 years, and in 1986 it was 17.9 years, an increase of 30%.

Figure 46:

Life Expectancy at Age 65

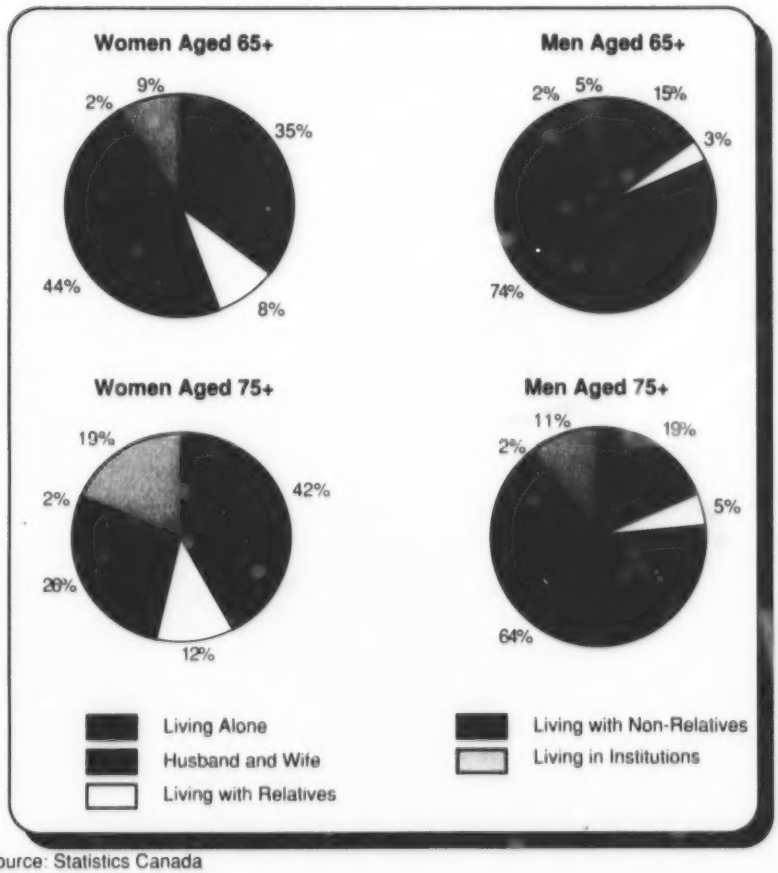


Source: Statistics Canada

An increasing proportion of the elderly are women. While there are roughly equal numbers of men and women in British Columbia up to the age of 60, after that age the numbers change significantly. There are twice as many women over the age of 85 as there are men. The increasing number of women among the elderly, and the fact that married women tend to be younger than their husbands means that older women are much more likely than are older men to be living alone. A majority of women over 65 and two-thirds of women over 75 are widowed, divorced or single. Almost 80% of men over 65 and 70% of men over 75 are married. Marital status has an impact on living arrangements, as is illustrated in Figure 47. Women are much more likely to be living alone.

Figure 47:

B.C. Seniors Population by Living Arrangement



Source: Statistics Canada

Older women are likely to have significantly lower incomes than are older men for a number of reasons related to past employment patterns and incomes. This gap is particularly wide among those between the ages of 65 and 69. At that age, some men are still working. Past 70, most men have retired and their incomes drop. Women's incomes stay essentially unchanged at a relatively low level.

Implications

For the ministry, the aging population will place new demands on scarce resources. The aging of the population means that there will be a smaller group to draw upon as partners in the community for programs such as foster parents. An increased proportion of the population will need the support of the community. Since seniors tend to be more service-oriented then goods-oriented, markets will shift in those areas which attract retirees. This trend will further increase the growth of employment in the service sector.

As the population ages, there will be an increasing demand on ministry programs such as SAFER (Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters). The pattern of needs in other programs will change as well. The ministry is expected to provide services to 4000 persons with mental handicaps by the year 1994. As these persons age, their needs will change, and their ability to be independent in the community will diminish.

The aging of the population also means a proportionate reduction in the number of young workers coming onto the labour force. At the same time, middle aged and older workers are leaving. Some are retiring early and some are being made redundant by "leaner and meaner" organizational structures as the economy slows down. These changes may produce different types of clients for the ministry as more elderly persons seek training and retraining for employment in order to retain financial independence.

The need for Services for Seniors will increase particularly for programs such as the Senior Citizens Counsellors Program which helps seniors to be aware of and able to use the services and programs available to them.

By the year 2000, a variety of housing programs will also be needed in order that seniors can retain their independence.

Trends

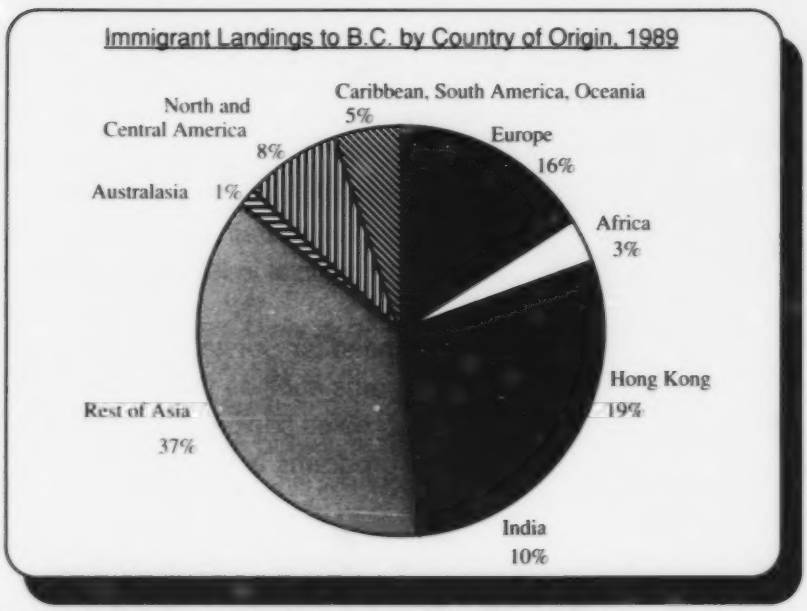
There have been significant shifts in the patterns of immigration over the past decade, particularly in the regions in the Lower Mainland. This area attracts approximately 80% of the province's net international immigrants. The per capita rate of immigration to British Columbia is higher than in any other province except Ontario.

Over the past 20 years, there has been a significant shift in the area of origin of immigrants coming to Canada. In 1968, approximately 65% of all Canadian immigration originated in Europe, followed by 12% from Asia, and 11% from the United States. In 1989, only 16% of British Columbia immigrants originated from Europe, 5% were from the United States, and 66% were from Asia.

The source of immigrants coming into British Columbia and Canada in 1989 is shown in Figure 48.

Figure 48:

Immigrant Landings to British Columbia,



Source: Employment and Immigration Canada, October 1990

The number of immigrants coming to British Columbia is increasing and since January, 1990, British Columbia had already experienced a 25% increase over last year. It is expected that British Columbia's share of the total immigration to Canada will increase to approximately 14.3% by 1992. British Columbia leads the other provinces in investor immigrants with a 48% share of the Canadian total.

The shift to Asia as a source of immigration is illustrated by the fact that 64% of all visas issued under the Entrepreneur Program and 79% of visas issued under the Investor Program in Canada were processed in Hong Kong.

Implications

It is vital that these immigrants are able to make the transition into British Columbia society and play an active role in the social and economic life of the community. Responsive social services and programs which recognize and respond to the diversity of culture and language will be essential to assist in social integration and to enable access to services.

The ministry will be facing an increase in the demand for income asistance for immigrants and refugees in need over the next few years.

An increase in immigration will also mean that particular effort will be required in areas such as the Lower Mainland to ensure that all clients who require assistance can access programs. Barriers to independence can be addressed through publications on services in various languages, cross-cultural sensitivity training for staff and tailoring programs to be linguistically and culturally appropriate.

THE AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY OF HOUSING

Trends

Residents in most parts of the province are facing the problems of the increasing cost of housing. Since this cost can create a barrier to the achievement of independence by ministry clients, "housing" becomes a social policy issue and not just a commodity in the marketplace.

The availability of housing is a function of supply and demand and is influenced by many factors. The future demand for housing will depend on the trends toward household formation, net migration, and population aging. Home ownership is affected by such factors as income, interest rates and house prices.

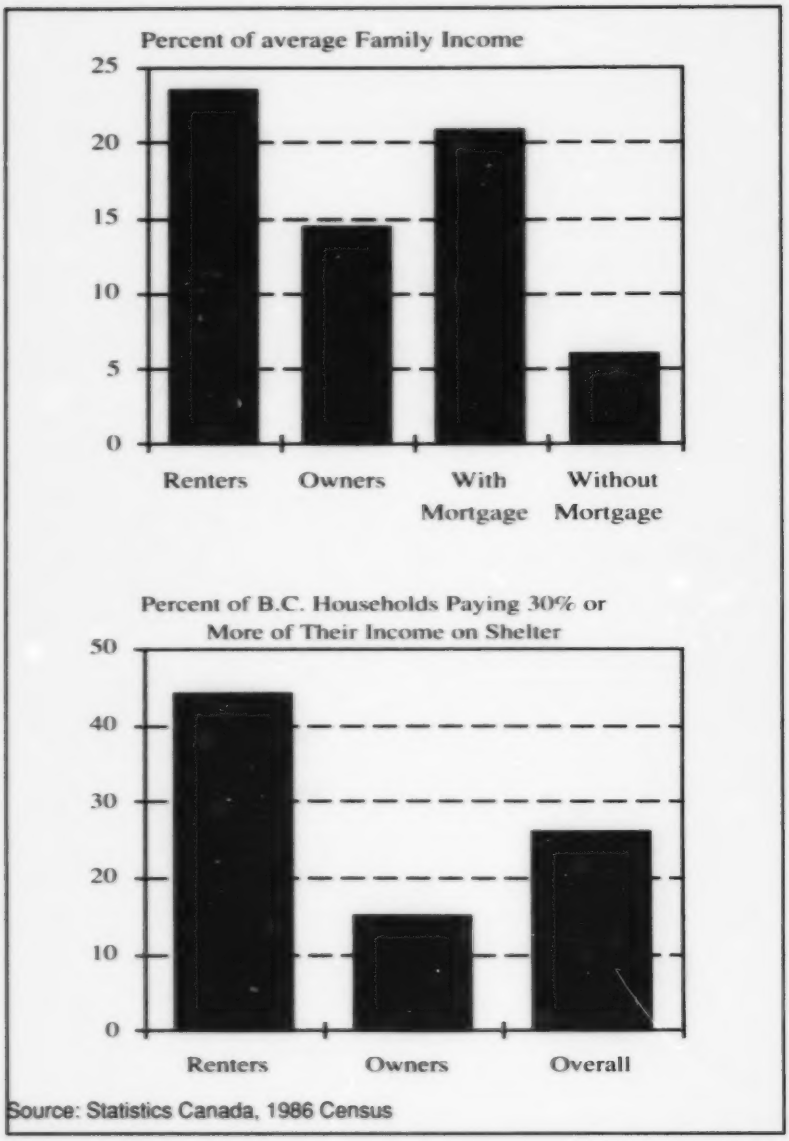
Affordability of housing is often determined by measuring the percentage of a household income which is spent on shelter costs. The cost of shelter includes payments for utilities, municipal services, and depending on whetner the dwelling is owned or rented, mortgages, property taxes and rent.

The actual dollars spent on shelter varies considerably from region to region, as can be seen from the preceding statistics on rent and house prices for each region. On average, renters in British Columbia spend a higher proportion of their annual household income on shelter than do home owners.

As a general rule, households that spend 30% or more of their income on shelter are considered to potentially have an affordability problem. In 1986, 15.2% of British Columbian owner occupied households spent 30% or more of their income on shelter, with 5.6% spending 50% or more. In the case of renters, 44.2% spent 30% or more of their annual income on shelter, with 21.1% spending 50% or more. These figures are illustrated in Figure 49.

Figure 49:

Shelter Costs of Renters and Owners



Source: Statistics Canada, 1986 Census

Rental vacancy rates in 1989 dropped to less than 1% in some urban areas and have remained low in 1990. Rent increases are expected to have averaged 15% for 1990. By November, 1990, housing starts in urban British Columbia were down 40% from the same period a year earlier.

Implications

The ministry and its clients are affected both directly and indirectly by a shortage in the supply of affordable housing.

As housing costs increase, more people are unable to meet the costs of renting an apartment or buying a home. This leads to longer waiting lists for social housing (which is provided through the British Columbia Housing Management Commission) and an increase in the use of overcrowded hostels.

A slowdown in the economy exacerbates the problem by lowering income levels and increasing unemployment rates. This will mean an increase in the number of families who become eligible for some form of assistance to meet their costs of shelter. This need could increase pressure on the ministry for rental assistance, shelter allowances under GAIN, Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER), and renters' tax reduction.

Persons who receive income assistance are particularly vulnerable during times of low supply and increasing costs of rental housing. The shelter allowance portion of assistance may be insufficient in some areas to cover the increases in rent, and a shortage of supply limits a family's ability to choose alternative accommodation.

Some families are faced with the need to leave their home community to find affordable housing. The availability of housing is closely linked in many regions with the inadequacy of public transportation which further frustrates many of the ministry's clients' attempts to obtain work and achieve financial independence.

In some regions, the lack of affordable housing is also causing problems in recruiting and retaining both staff and community partners.

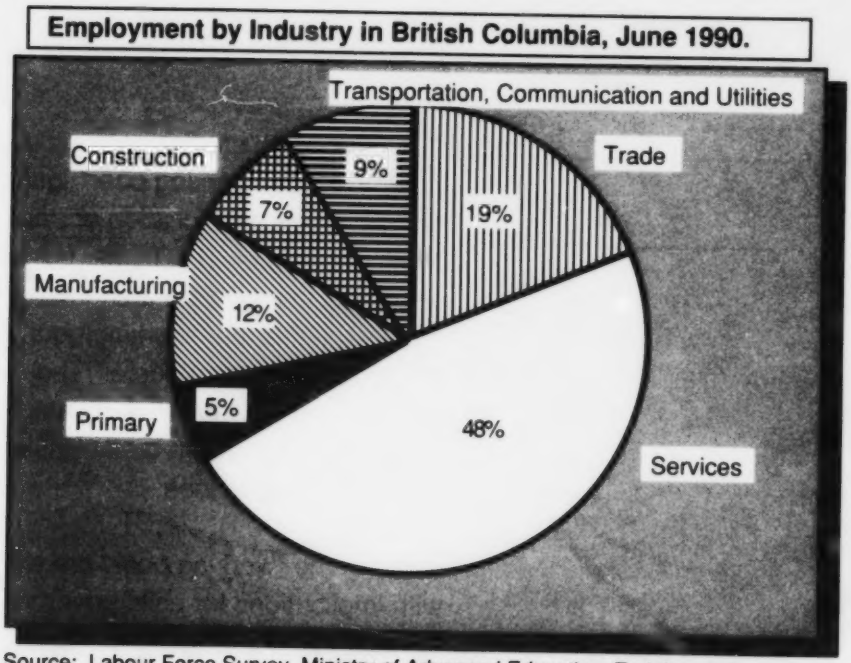
THE CHANGING WORKFORCE

Trends

The impact of a changing economy is a recurring theme in every region of the province. There are changes occurring in the types of jobs which are available, and in the skills required to do the work. The major area of economic growth is in the service sector, especially in the urban areas. The service-producing industries as a whole have been growing much more strongly than the goods-producing industries. The highest growth rates have been in education and retail trade.

Figure 50:

Employment by Industry, June 1990



Source: Labour Force Survey, Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, June 1990

Figure 50 illustrates the predominance of the service sector as a major employer in the province in 1990.

There has also been a significant and steady increase in the number of women participating in all sectors of the workforce. In 1988, 55% of families in British Columbia had dual incomes, and this percentage is expected to increase. It will be necessary for women to continue to participate in order to keep pace with the demands for a skilled workforce, particularly since there will be fewer and fewer youth entering the workforce as the population ages.

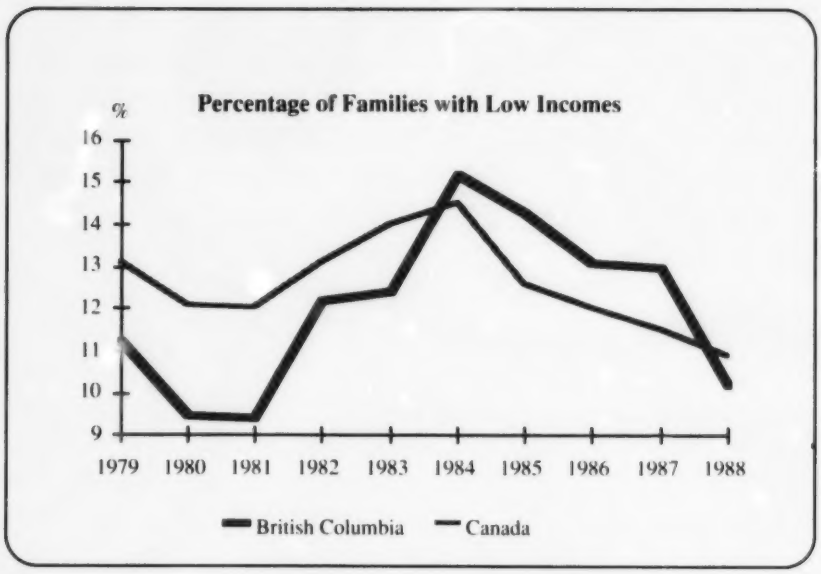
Society is becoming increasingly aware of the problems of the "working poor" in the community. As a general working definition, the "working poor" may be described as those people whose paid employment is not sufficient to escape poverty (as defined by Statistics Canada as the Low Income Cut-Off) but is not so low as to render them eligible for social assistance.

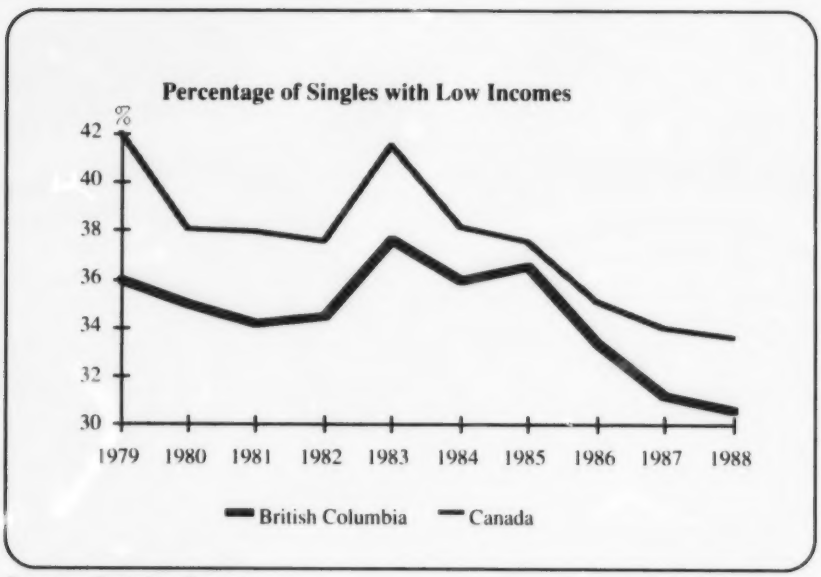
Consistent with studies of income differentials in British Columbia, the "working poor" generally have achieved only modest levels of education or training. Very few "working poor" are employed full time, but are instead underemployed or subject to intermittent and part-time work patterns. Youth often fall under the "working poor" definitions when they are just entering the workforce. They are at the low end of the pay scale, partly due to their lack of experience. However, for youth, poverty can be a transient state until they move into better paying jobs.

Many of the "working poor" are single parents, a situation with implications for child poverty in the province. Families headed by women are much more likely to be among the "working poor" than are families headed by men. In British Columbia, 35% of female headed families are low income compared to 5.4% of male headed families. With the recovery of the economy in recent years, the number of low income single persons decreased much more rapidly than did the number of low income families. Figure 51 illustrates these trends and British Columbia's relative position compared with Canada as a whole.

Figure 51:

Families and Singles with Low Incomes in British Columbia and Canada





Source: Statistics Canada

Implications

In many cases, the shift to the service sector means a shift to lower paying and seasonal jobs, especially for the unskilled workers. The service sector employs a large percentage of women who still earn considerably less than their male counterparts. Sixty-one percent of employed women work in three low-paid occupational categories: clerical, sales and service.

Another feature of the service sector is that it is an industry which is largely made up of small businesses. In 1989, 98.8% of Canada's businesses had fewer than 100 employees, and 75% had under 5 employees. It is expected that most of the new jobs created over the next decade will be in the service sector.

As employment patterns and family structures change, there is a growing need for accessible, affordable daycare to ensure that families, and single parent families in particular, have the ability to pursue opportunities for independence. In 1986, 56% of mothers with children under age 3 participated in the labour force, and 64% of mothers with children under 16 were working outside the home. At the same time the ministry is facing a shortage of care-givers to deliver services and programs.

The purpose of the ministry's Programs for Independence is to move clients toward permanent employment. As the types of employment change, the challenge for the ministry is to assist clients to make the transition to full employment and self-sufficiency. This will mean addressing such things as transportation and day care so that the costs of working do not exceed the benefits earned.

To address the broad issues of the "working poor", more information is needed in order to understand the problems. Only then will it be possible to develop solutions which will ensure that the "working poor" are able to retain their independence and improve their quality of life.

THE CHANGING FAMILY

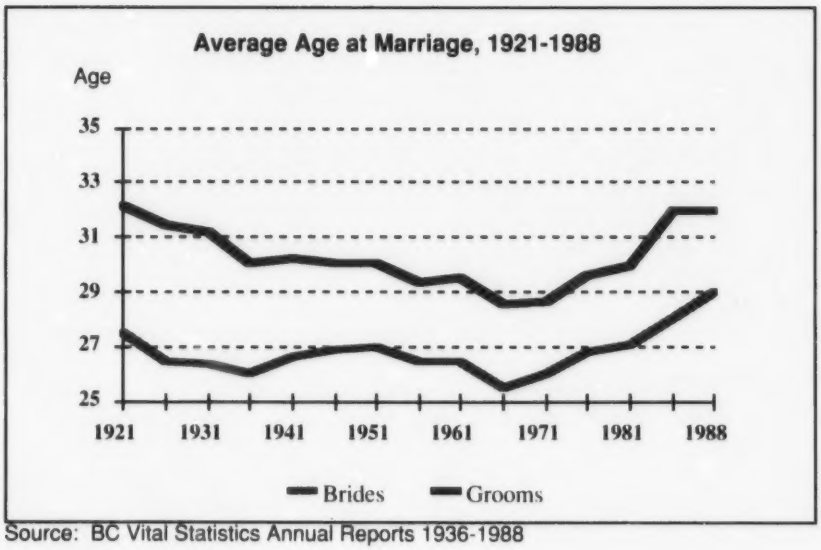
Trends

Family patterns are changing, and these changes have meant that different issues have been emerging from those which families faced in the past. For example, recent statistics show trends of delayed marriage, increased common-law unions and divorce rates, and an increase in the number of single parents.

In recent years, the average age at marriage has increased substantially. In 1988 the average age of brides was 29 and the average age of grooms was 32. The changing trends are illustrated in figure 52.

Figure 52:

Average Age of Brides and Grooms at Marriage, 1921-1988

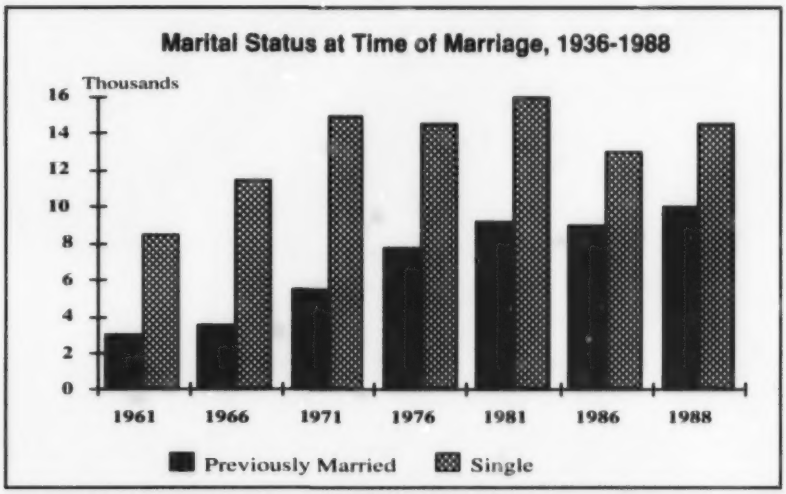


Source: BC Vital Statistics Annual Reports 1936-1988

There has also been an increase in the number of remarriages as illustrated in Figure 53. In 1988, remarriage represented 40% of all marriages that year, the highest rate in Canada.

Figure 53:

Marital Status at Time of Marriage, 1936-1988

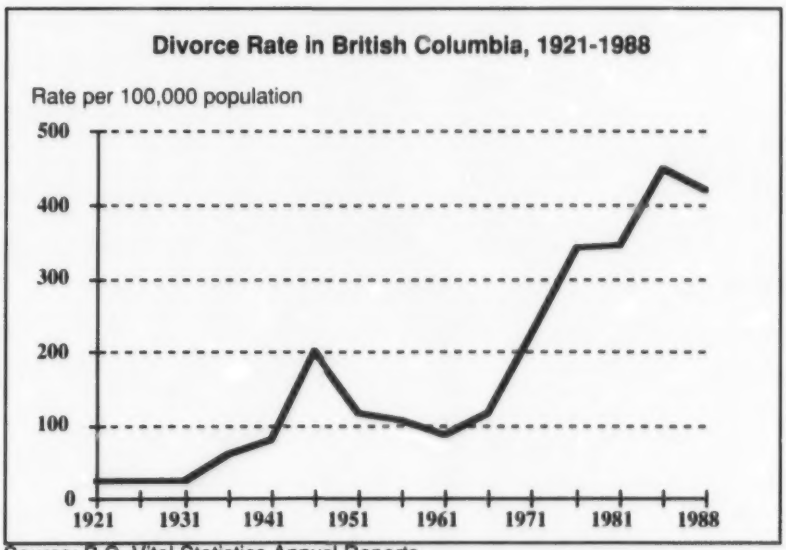


Source: BC Vital Statistics Annual Reports 1936-88

A number of factors, including changes to legislation, have led to an increase in divorce rates. With over 33% of marriages ending in divorce, British Columbia has the highest divorce rate in Canada. Figure 54 illustrates the effect of changes in the Divorce Act in 1985. In divorces involving children, the largest percentage of custody awards continue to grant custody to the mother.

Figure 54:

Divorce Rates per 100,000 population, 1921-1988



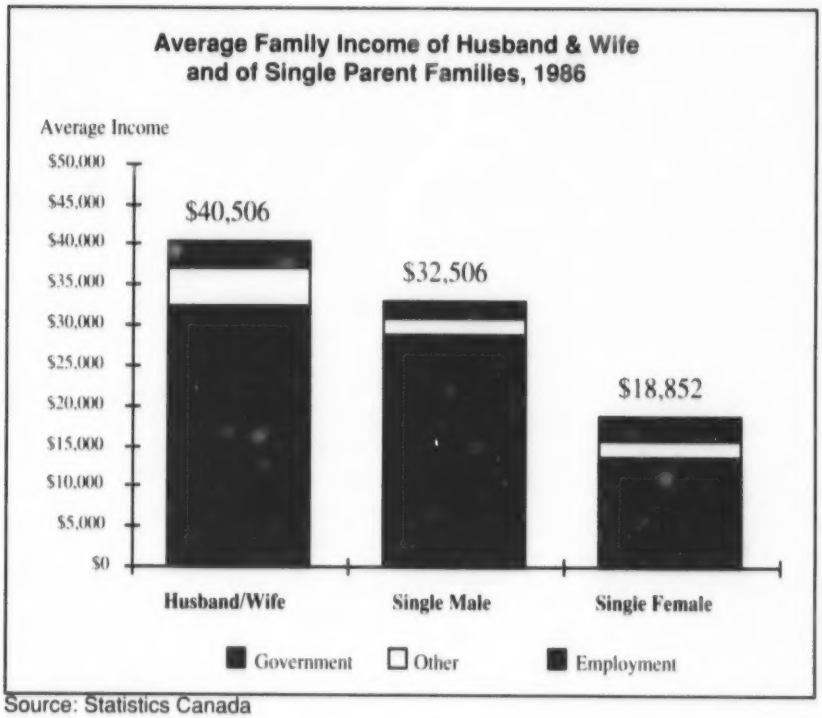
Source: B.C. Vital Statistics Annual Reports

In 1986, there were 96,645 single parent families in British Columbia. This means that 20% of all families with children are families where one parent does not live with the child. The number of single parents increased by 93% in the 15 years between 1971 and 1986.

Income levels of single parents who are employed are much lower than husband/wife families as illustrated in Figure 55.

Figure 55:

Average Family Incomes



Source: Statistics Canada

Eighty-two percent of single parents in 1986 were women. Young women who are single parents who are participating in the workforce are particularly affected. In 1986, the average annual income of male single parents under 35 was $22,407; the average annual income of female single parents under 35 was $10, 980. Almost 40% of the single parents in British Colombia in 1989 relied to some extent on Income Assistance. This group of young single parents is growing and is also the group most likely to have preschool age children in need of day care.

There are children who have problems which need the help of a network of caregivers, resources and counselling in urban centres throughout the province. These problems may include drugs, prostitution, "street kids", parent/teen conflict and HIV+ or drug addicted babies. In many cases there is also the need for both temporary and permanent accommodation for those under 19.

Implications

Changes to family structures, no matter how common they may be, lead to stress for the affected children and parents. The ministry, through the programs of the Family and Children's Services Division, will be affected by the trends to less traditional families.

If divorce rates continue to rise, there will be increasing demands placed on Family Support Services for counselling, temporary shelter and rehabilitation resources. The increasing number of single parents, particularly young mothers, will continue to look to the ministry for financial support. There will be the need to assist these families in achieving a greater degree of financial independence.

Service delivery through partnerships will continue to develop as a means of providing effective, coordinated service. As communication and information links improve with advances in technology, there will be better coordination of the services which are provided by the various contractors and ministries who have clients in common.

Overall, the increased diversity in family types will continue to challenge society, the government and the ministry to respond to different needs.

FIRST NATIONS

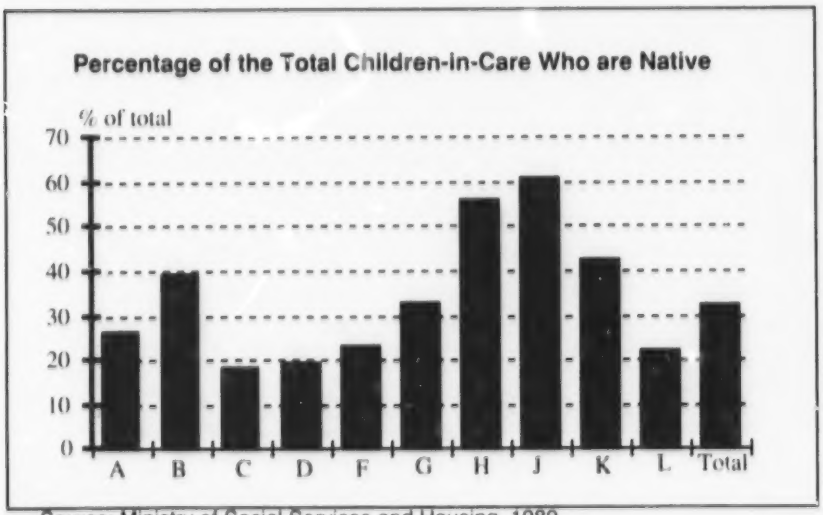
Trends

Native communities and organizations have become increasingly involved in developing programs that they control and administer. For example, there is considerable interest in the establishment of independent Native child welfare programs throughout the province.

The significance of involving the Native community in programs for children is illustrated by Figure 56. This shows the percentage of children-in-care who are Native in each region and in the province as a whole.

Figure 56:

Native Children in Care



Source: Ministry of Social Services and Housing, 1989

Implications

Given the fact that the birth rate is 2.5 times the national average, and that many Native families experience serious socio-economic difficulties, the ministry faces significant challenges in developing approaches that will meet the need. The ministry is working to enhance the involvement of Native groups in child welfare practice.

Innovative approaches to training, recruitment and strengthening partnerships will be necessary in order to achieve governments' social policy objectives for the Native community.

Section III: Conclusion

The process of assessing the economic and social environment of the ten ministry regions and the province as a whole has been a process which in itself has illustrated one of the most common themes - constant change. When the environmental scans first began in January 1990, there was an air of optimism and most people believed that there would be a continuation of the boom years of 1987, 1988 and 1989. As the economic and social reviews were developed within each region, presented by each of the regional directors, and summarized and analyzed over the summer months, many changes started to occur. Interest rates stubbornly remained high, the economies of eastern Canada started to slow, and the uncertainties of the world political scene began to be felt in everyday life through the increasing costs of oil.

The ability to plan for the future is restricted by one's ability to predict the future. In order to see ahead, it is necessary to maintain a constant watch for the changes which will affect the people of British Columbia, their jobs, their families, and their cultures. Only then will it be possible for the ministry to be ready when and where services and help are needed.

This document attempts to summarize and assess the economic and social environment within which the ministry is carrying out its daily business throughout the ten administrative regions in the province. It is a part of a planning process which will lead to the development of the ministry's business and operational plans for 1991-92.